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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Berkeley Chooses Compassion: Measure S Rejected

by Ariel Messman-Rucker

As cities across the country pass laws to criminalize homeless people, using a marginalized portion of the population as a scapegoat for larger social and economic problems, Berkeley residents went against the tide of repression and voted no on Measure S, a ballot measure that would have criminalized homeless persons for sitting on city sidewalks.

The victory over Measure S is especially inspiring because this is the first time anywhere in the nation since 1994 that a ballot measure to criminalize homeless people and curtail their civil liberties has been defeated.

"Usually when minority rights are put to a vote it doesn't turn out very well," said Bob Offer-Westort, No on S campaign coordinator. "It's a terrible way for handling things like that. In recent years when voters have been asked to weigh in on the rights of homeless people, those elections have generally gone badly."

The hard-fought campaign that defeated Berkeley's proposed sitting ban is even more remarkable considering that Measure S was championed by Mayor Tom Bates and the city's most powerful business organizations, which vastly outspent the financially strapped homeless organizations that opposed the initiative.

Though the final count of campaign contributions and expenditures is not available yet, the current accounting shows that the Yes on S campaign spent more than $115,000 while the No on S campaign only spent about $15,000, Offer-Westort said.

After nine days of ballot counting, the No on S/Stand Up for the Right to Sit Down campaign announced victory over the anti-sitting measure on November 14. When the final results were tallied, Measure S was defeated by 52.30 percent of Berkeley's voters, a victory margin of 2,458 votes, according to the Alameda County Registrar of Voters.

"I feel pretty excited about that victory," said Offer-Westort. "The campaign for Measure S was by far the most expensive campaign that Berkeley's seen in a long, long time and so it's pretty exciting to show that good grassroots organizing can beat big money."

If the measure had passed, sitting down on the sidewalks of Berkeley's commercial districts would have become illegal between the hours of 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, and those found in violation would have been subject to citation, fines and even jail time.

Proponents of Measure S marketed the ordinance as a way to help local businesses and make Berkeley streets safer, but homeless advocates and service providers were certain the measure would be used as a tool to criminalize homelessness and create a legal means of driving homeless people from public view.

In resistance to Measure S, Youth Spirit Artworks held a colorful action at Berkeley City Hall involving young artists and giant puppets. Ariel-Messman Rucker photo

"Yes on S spent over $100,000 trying to get their message out to Berkeley voters, sending deceptive literature saying that Measure S will help people and save jobs when, in reality, it will do neither," said Jesse Arreguin of the City Council.

Yes on S also tried to persuade voters that their campaign was a small-scale effort when, in fact, the majority of their funding came from big developers.

"We were drastically outspent, that's for sure, and the bulk of their money came from real-estate and developer interests. It really showed that this was not some feel-good, grassroots, small-business measure they portrayed it to be," said Christopher Cook, communications director for No on S who also runs Progressive Message, a communications consultancy.

See **Berkeley Chooses Compassion** *page 4*

Stories of Recycling and Redemption on the Street

Hayok Kay rests her head on her cart in a park across the street from the recycling center. Fatigued and hurting, she gave way to exhaustion. Amir Soltani photo

The stories of recyclers are an invaluable asset to society — living maps which illustrate the holes in our safety nets and the true beauty, dignity and value of those who fell through them. And they show us why we need to rectify these faults.

by Zachary J. Stickney

I first met Hayok Kay — Miss Kay, as she likes to be called — near the Alliance Metals Recycling Center in West Oakland. She had just finished a day of recycling, and as I approached her she was leaning exhaustedly against her shopping cart, eating a piece of bread she had found.

What I'll never forget about Miss Kay is that, in spite of her deplorable condition, she nevertheless had a certain air of dignity around her, and more obviously, a certain cuteness. Standing less than 5 feet tall, you'd be hard-pressed to find a tinier recycler in all of Oakland, and I challenge anyone to find a sweeter smile or laugh.

But for all her dignity and cuteness, her situation remains destitute. Nearing 60, Miss Kay's life has been a history of impermanence. She was born in Seoul, South Korea, but left soon after to Japan before ending up in the Bay Area. Though she has had difficulty finding permanent housing (even in shelters) for years, recently her problems have come to a head.

Up until September 2012, she had been living in a homeless shelter in Richmond and commuting by bus to Oakland where she would complete her recycling routes. But near the end of September, she was kicked out due to alleged suicidal tendencies. Hayok had been caught hitting her head against the wall in her room.

When asked why, her answers alternated between, "I don't want to live here anymore," and "I don't want to live anymore," prompting the managers of the shelter to remove her from the facility. They simply did not have the resources to deal with such devastation.

Since being kicked out, Miss Kay has alternated between staying with old friends, paying for a few nights' stay in motel rooms, living in emergency shelters, or sleeping next to the Emeryville town hall. She has even spent a few nights in the hospital, both for her physical pain as well as her mental difficulties.

While staying in the motel rooms — a move funded by her meager General Assistance allotments and her left-over recycling income, and her meals provided

See **Recycling and Redemption** *page 12*

Occupy Our Homes Successfully Fights Foreclosures

Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part series on Occupy Our Homes Atlanta. See the January and February 2013 issues of Street Spirit for our reports on many other recent victories against foreclosures.

by Terry Messman

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929, grew up and attended high school in Atlanta, and then earned his B.A. degree in sociology from Morehouse College in Atlanta.

After Rev. King was assassinated in 1968 while organizing the Poor People's Campaign, he was buried in Atlanta. His widow, Corretta Scott King, established the King Center in Atlanta to preserve and pass on his legacy of nonviolent resistance to the interrelated evils of poverty, racial discrimination and militarism.

Rev. King was assassinated while trying to mobilize poor people in a massive campaign of nonviolent resistance to secure affordable housing for all, full employment and adequate income for those unable to work — the Economic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged.

When King was buried in Atlanta, his work was memorialized in the city of his birth, but the hopes for a Poor People's Campaign seemingly were buried with him.

That bleak view is reinforced by the desperate poverty that grips whole areas of Atlanta today, especially in many neighborhoods where African-Americans suffer disproportionately from homelessness, foreclosures and evictions.

It is a sad reality that Atlanta, Georgia, the city with gleaming memorials to Martin Luther King's struggle for justice, is one of the areas hit hardest by the economic crash and the housing crash that have reduced hundreds of thousands to homelessness or risk of eviction.

But this economic malaise has not driven out the spirit of nonviolent resistance from Atlanta's poorest neighborhoods.

Timothy Franzen, program director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Peace and Conflict Resolution program in Atlanta, has achieved dramatic success in working with Occupy Our Homes Atlanta to organize people threatened with eviction and foreclosure.

The dedicated organizers of Occupy Our Homes Atlanta have achieved some of the most remarkable victories in the nation by organizing those threatened by foreclosure to nonviolently confront the banks and real-estate interests that have driven a record number of people into eviction and homelessness.

In Franzen's four years with the AFSC, he has been instrumental in helping build a movement to defend besieged homeowners from the foreclosures that have struck Georgia with gale-force fury.

In an interview with *Street Spirit,* Franzen said that many homeowners in Atlanta are facing nothing less than "a tornado of foreclosures and eviction."

Thousands are reeling from the devastation caused when the housing bubble burst. Even though the banks were bailed out with billions of federal dollars, economically distressed homeowners were abandoned to weather the storm of foreclosures with next to no help from their government.

"Georgia is regularly the top state for foreclosures," Franzen said. "Half of Atlanta, the southern part, is almost 50 percent vacant at this point as a result of this tornado of foreclosures and evictions that have caused a manmade disaster, one like Atlanta has never seen before."

Out of all the issues he could have chosen to address as director of the AFSC Peace and Conflict Resolution program, Franzen said he chose to wade into the flood tide of foreclosures because the AFSC often chooses to work with the most oppressed communities where few other organizations are working and many people have been essentially abandoned.

Brigitte Walker appears on CNN after Occupy Our Homes Atlanta saved her home.

Foreclosures and evictions are causing entire neighborhoods to fall apart, ravaged by levels of poverty that rival the economic misery of the Great Depression.

When asked why Atlanta was hit so hard by the foreclosure crisis, Franzen described the "pro-business climate" in Georgia. In other states, he said, it may take two years for a foreclosure to go through and for somebody to be put out of their house.

"But in Georgia," he said, "we're a non-judicial foreclosure state so you don't have to be taken to court. You can have your home foreclosed on after 31 days of missing a payment and it happens at breakneck speed. The process is so fast here that we are really one of the states that inspired 'robo-signings' because hundreds of people are losing their homes every day."

Banks began putting so many people out of their homes so fast that bank executives didn't have time to sign all the foreclosure documents. So they engaged in deception by hiring low-wage workers for a fraudulent practice known as "robo-signing."

Franzen said, "It's a type of fraud where the banks will set up an office somewhere and hire a couple of low-wage workers at $10 an hour and they will sit there and go through hundreds, sometimes thousands, of foreclosure documents and sign all the foreclosure documents *en masse*."

Another cause of the foreclosure crisis, he said, is that "Wells Fargo and Sun Trust and some other banks have already settled out of court for their racist lending practices. It's a fact that they gave out predatory loans to people of color and that's one reason why the south of Atlanta is 50 percent empty, because those are the communities of color and they have just been ravaged.

"They look like a storm went through there because a storm *did* go through — an economic storm that pushed all these folks out of their houses."

Franzen charged that the banks were, in essence, using the housing market to gamble against the future of thousands of Georgia's poorest residents.

"These banks were betting against folks in those communities," he said.

"They were giving out loans that they knew were bad. They have not had to pay a real consequence for that. The communities, on the other hand, have paid a really serious consequence. We have a homeless population that has exploded and these empty homes have become eyesores that have depressed the community. They have become crime magnets that are destroying the fabric of the neighborhood."

The Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless reports that more children live in poverty in Atlanta than in any city in the nation. Many homeless advocates estimate that more than 20,000 people are homeless in Atlanta.

At the same time that poverty and unemployment rates were increasing, and housing costs were rising to historic levels, along came a destructive new form of speculation by the banks and mortgage companies — the final devastating component of what is now a perfect storm.

Banks began issuing predatory loans that have jeopardized thousands of homeowners in Georgia. Just as jobless rates are highest in the African-American community, so too are predatory loans striking those neighborhoods with disproportionate impact. Even a person's home is not safe from the manipulations of the banking class.

Franzen said, "When the speculation market became intimately connected to the places we call home, it became in the best interest of the banks to get more and more folks taking loans. So they started giving loans to anybody that would take them, whether they could afford it or not.

"They were throwing loans out in the street and whoever could catch one would grab one. They forged documents, and broke their own rules to give loans to folks that couldn't afford it. It got so bad that the market eventually crashed and now 60 percent of people here are underwater."

Last December, Occupy Our Homes Atlanta was successful in helping to save the home of Brigitte Walker, an Iraq War veteran who had been gravely injured in combat, from foreclosure.

Brigitte Walker was sent to Iraq in February 2003. After more than a year of seeing fellow soldiers die in combat, her own military service ended in May 2004 when a roadside bomb exploded, severely injuring her back. Doctors placed titanium plates to rebuild her spine. She still experiences a great deal of pain from nerve damage in her spine.

While still in the military, she bought a home outside of Atlanta in 2004. After buying her home, Walker suffered a major economic setback when the Army placed her on medical retirement against her wishes. She was now forced to subsist on disability checks, and that cut her income in half, according to Franzen.

As a result, Walker began falling behind on her mortgage payments. For three years, she kept applying for a loan modification based on hardship. Despite her service to her country, despite the spinal injury she suffered in Iraq, despite her unavoidable loss of income, JP Morgan Chase Bank initiated foreclosure proceedings on her home.

Chase Bank set the date of her eviction for Jan. 3, 2012. "If ever somebody had a legitimate hardship, there it is," Franzen said. "But instead of the bank saying, 'We're going to work with you,' they said, 'We're going to sell your house on the courthouse steps and there is nothing you can do.' So she reached out to us three weeks before her house was set to be auctioned off on the courthouse steps and we set up tents in her yard."

Occupy set up tents on Walker's front lawn on Dec. 6, 2011. Franzen said, "We put a huge banner over the house that said, 'This home is occupied, shame on Chase Bank,' and we called a press conference and said we're not going to leave until Chase Bank does the right thing."

Occupy Our Homes is a great sign of hope for all people caught up in the shattering experience of eviction.

The protest was all over the news. Next day, six members of Occupy entered a Chase Bank with Walker's hardship letter and read it out loud in Occupy's mic-check style. The bank threatened the six with arrest, but unknown to bank officials, more than 100 other protesters had been waiting around the corner. They suddenly surrounded the bank and remained there until the bank accepted Walker's hardship letter asking for a loan modification.

That very night, Chase Bank officials called for the first time in all these proceedings, and pledged to work with Walker. Only six days later, the bank granted her a loan modification that not only allowed her to keep her house, but lowered her mortgage payments by several hundred dollars per month.

"It was a game changer for her," Franzen said. "The banks were forced to relieve her debt. So, in a small way, that was the first time we regulated a bank."

One year later, Brigitte Walker is still living in her home with her family. She has remained active in Occupy Our Homes.

As a result of all the positive news reports of her protest, Walker was invited to go to the White House and address Obama's top housing officials, where she gave "a real riveting speech" about defending people's homes from eviction.

Occupy Our Homes Atlanta has saved several other people from eviction this past year. It has generated national media coverage that has done a great deal to educate the public about the foreclosure crisis in America. Occupy also has begun challenging broader structural injustices, including predatory loans, robo-signing and other deplorable banking practices.

For the past 12 months, Franzen has been in nearly perpetual motion, traveling to protest after protest, bank after bank, arrest after arrest. In solidarity with those caught in the foreclosure crisis, he has been arrested five times in the past year for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Occupy Our Homes is a great sign of hope for all people caught up in the shattering experience of eviction. Their actions give us hope that we can overcome — no matter how powerful and well-entrenched the banks may be, no matter how many lawyers and lobbyists they employ.

Until Occupy Our Homes came along, low-income homeowners were met with the stone-hearted refusal of bank officials to negotiate in good faith with them. Occupy Our Homes changed the rules of this rigged game. Their insights in organizing now provide a highly valuable blueprint for action for housing activists everywhere.

Martin Luther King may be buried in Atlanta, but the spirit of his Poor People's Campaign can never be buried. Today, fully 44 years after he first raised the nation's hopes with his vision of economic justice for the poor, King's truth goes marching on in the streets of Atlanta.

In his last dream, King invited the poorest citizens to camp out to press their demands for housing. Now, Occupy Our Homes has taken up this call for economic justice. It has shown the same willingness to go to jail in solidarity with the poor.

There is no better way to honor the memory of Martin Luther King in the city of his birth. When Atlanta activists march in support of people facing eviction, Martin marches alongside them, unseen.

The Unmourned Death of Elvis Presley in San Francisco

by Robert L. Terrell

I was immediately filled with dread while reading a recent newspaper article about the homeless man who was run over and killed while he slept on the ground at the entrance of the garage door of a residence in San Francisco's South of Market area.

Even though the story did not contain the dead man's name, I knew instantly it was Elvis.

I knew because of the location where the tragedy took place.

Elvis slept most nights in front of that garage door. He huddled beside the huge, mechanically operated, metal door when it was raining and cold. And he spent more days than he should have passed out on the sidewalk directly in the path of automobiles entering and leaving the garage.

I knew it was Elvis because I have been photographing him for years, documenting his curbside saga, hoping to learn something, anything, I might use to assist people trapped in dreadful circumstances of the sort that defined his life on the street.

During one of our many discussions, he told me he had lived homeless in this neighborhood for more than 15 years. His broken, tired, ravaged body provided sad evidence of what that was like. Nonetheless, he never complained, and he didn't necessarily see himself as a victim.

Intrigued by his pleasant personality and jaunty attitude, I began to photograph him. He grew comfortable with this practice, and over the years I took hundreds of shots of him. In many of those shots, he is sprawled, drunk and oblivious, on the bare concrete in front of the garage door where the homeless man — unnamed in the first news accounts — was killed.

My intuition about the identity of that unidentified homeless man was confirmed a few days later by a second newspaper article, which presented the dead man's full name: Elvis Presley.

Elvis had told me his name over the years, but I was never convinced he was telling the truth — until his identity was confirmed in his newspaper death notice.

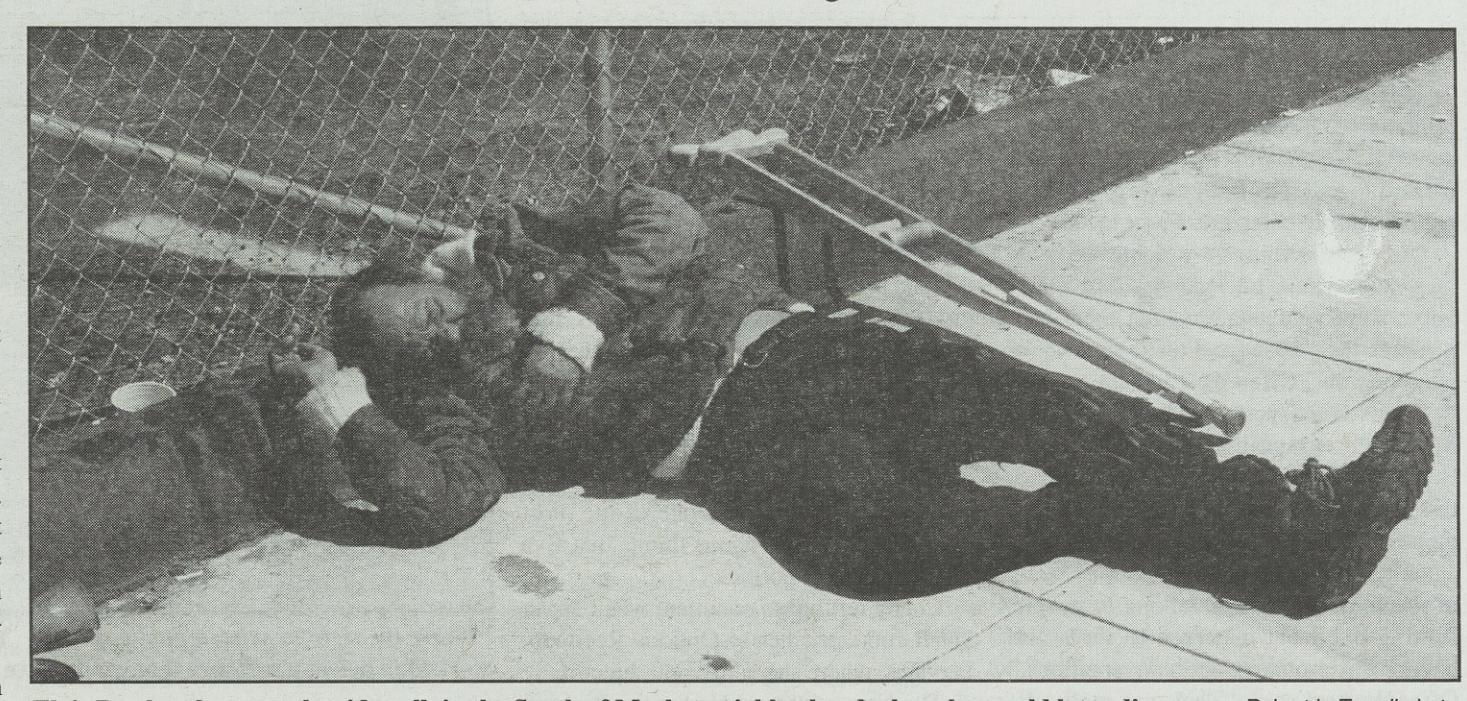
The newspaper account of his death was brief, and minimally informative. It stated his age, 55, the location of his death, the fact that he was run over by a female driver, and that the driver had not been charged for his death.

The story did not say anything about where he came from, whether he had family, why he was sleeping on the street, or how long he had been sleeping in front of that particular garage door. There was no information pertaining to efforts that might be made to identify and notify relatives.

While pondering the article, which I clipped from the newspaper and repeatedly read, I wondered whether memorial services are held somewhere in this elegant city for those who die alone on the street.

After spending several days privately mourning Elvis, I attempted to obtain more information about his death from people in the neighborhood who knew him. Many of those I approached said they were aware of his death, but none of them showed any significant emotion or regret.

"He was drunk all the time," said a local merchant, who happens to be one of the persons who sold Elvis liquor on a daily basis. There are, of course, other local liquor merchants who also profited from Elvis's debilitating drinking via regular sales of whatever kind of alcohol he preferred to consume at any given time.



Elvis Presley sleeps on the sidewalk in the South of Market neighborhood where he would later die. Robert L. Terrell photo

Elvis was homeless in this neighborhood for over 15 years. His broken, tired, ravaged body provided sad evidence of what that was like. Nonetheless, he never complained, and he didn't see himself as a victim.

"Sleeping in front of that garage door, he must have known that sooner or later he would be killed," replied a local woman, when asked her opinion of Elvis's death. She also said she held Elvis in low regard because he had little or no control of his drinking problem.

Given the fact that Elvis lived mostly on the street where everyone could see and interact with him on a daily basis, he was probably the best-known person in the neighborhood.

He was also outgoing, talkative, and unfailingly friendly. Nonetheless, other than the two short newspaper articles, there has been no noticeable community response to his gruesome death.

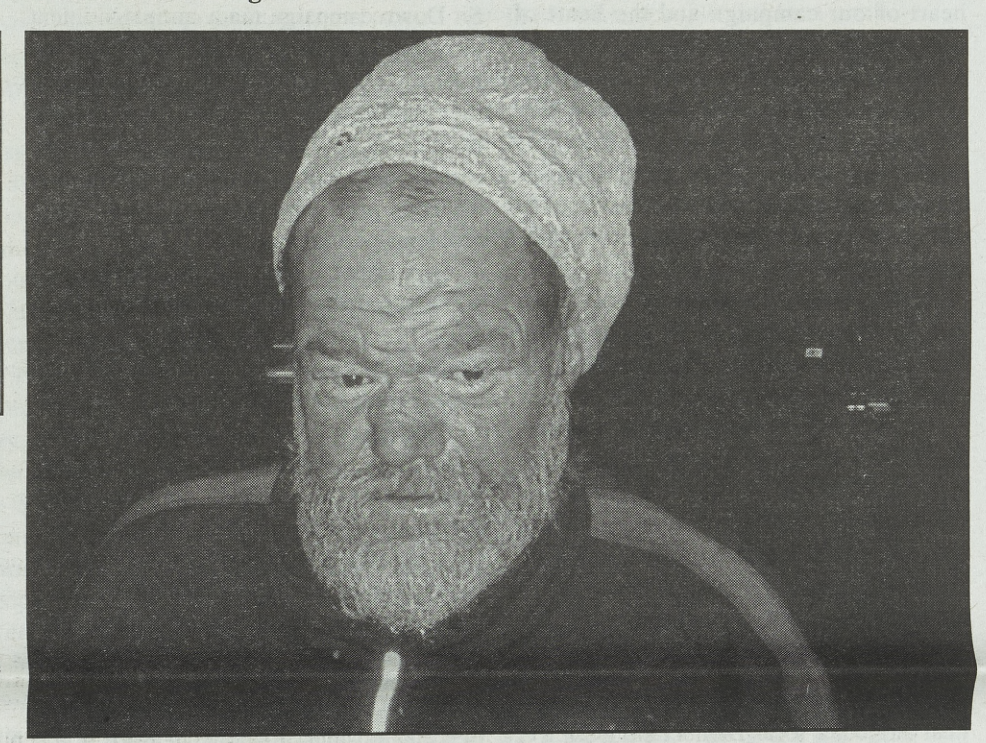
This is almost certainly due in part to the deeply entrenched modes of avoidance currently practiced in our society regarding our many homeless neighbors.

In any event, the dispassionate, alienated opinions expressed by some in response to the gruesome death of a man who lived on the streets in this neighborhood for more than a decade is troubling because of what it says about the tattered, threadbare remnants of what people used to refer to as a shared sense of community.

Unfortunately, a shared sense of community is one of the things we don't have a whole lot of these days in San Francisco's South of Market district. Mostly, people exist as individuals.

Bars, restaurants and supermarkets are our community meeting places.

The vast majority of those who work in local businesses leave the neighborhood at the end of the workday. However well paid they might be, and lots of them are highly compensated specialists in various aspects of high tech and the social media, few of them earn enough to purchase housing in a neighborhood where mini-sized condominiums and lofts are hard to find for less than half a million dollars.



Despite the toll taken by living on the street for so very long, Elvis Presley was outgoing, talkative and unfailingly friendly. Robert L. Terrell photo

Members of the chic crowd flood into the neighborhood when darkness descends. They are here for sporting events, art galleries, gourmet restaurants, underground clubs and adult adventure.

Money is the glue that holds the place together. All the new stuff streaming into the area is expensive, and every unused space is being transformed in accordance with its potential to produce profit.

Several years ago, there were numerous empty buildings and vacant lots in this section of town. There were places where low-salaried workers, the unemployed and homeless people could hang out and not be harassed. But the cheap food restaurants and low-rent housing that sustained such residents in the recent past are currently rare to nonexistent.

In other words, it has become difficult to impossible to hang out in this section of San Francisco for those who are not notably prosperous.

This is one of the primary reasons why people like Elvis spend their days and nights hovering precariously at the social margins of all that might be described as mainstream society.

It is critically important for as many of us as possible to understand that homeless people, largely due to economic forces far

See **Elvis Dies Alone, Unmourned** *page 11*

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Berkeley Chooses Compassion

from page 1

Homeless advocates, service providers, religious leaders, poverty rights attorneys, activists and members of the community banded together to fight the reprehensible ballot measure using grass-root tactics.

"All of the things we achieved were only achievable because we had really good, solid volunteers making them happen on a daily basis, and that's the core of why we won," Offer-Westort said.

The No on S/Stand Up for the Right to Sit Down campaign visited all of the Berkeley precincts and went door to door talking to residents and businesses for months prior to the election.

"The core of our campaign was being in touch, going out and talking to people, finding out what mattered to them and having those one-on-one conversations," Offer-Westort said. "That was really the heart of our campaign and the heart of how we won."

Securing the endorsements of the ACLU of Northern California, the Bay Area chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, and scores of religious leaders, community organizations and local political clubs also helped the No on S campaign reach voters.

"What I feel heartened by is that we got the arguments and the facts out in front of voters with very little money, but with a lot of passion," Cook said.

No on S was able to get the endorsements of five local Democratic clubs with the sole exception of the Berkeley Democratic Club, which endorsed Measure S and created a misleading slate card, which included their endorsement of the sitting ban, Offer-Westort said.

Despite its name, the Berkeley Democratic Club (BDC) does not officially represent the Democratic Party any more than any other local Democratic club. Yet their slate cards had "Official Democratic Party Voter Guide" printed on them.

"They're advertising to be someone who they're not," Offer-Westort said. "I mean it's extremely dishonest."

The BDC supplied John Caner, the chief executive officer of the Downtown Berkeley Association and a major Yes on S supporter, with their duplicitous slate cards to give out to voters.

Caner then had Davida Coady of Options Recovery Services, also a key backer of the Yes on S campaign, recruit approximately 50 homeless people to hand out the misleading slate cards to voters right outside of Berkeley polling places on Election Day.

The No on S campaign spoke with some of the homeless people and were told they thought they were being hired by the Democratic Party to hand out information in support of the Obama campaign.

"So they're handing out these slate cards, which are not of the Democratic Party, despite what they claim, and they're pushing an anti-homeless law," Offer-Westort said. "It's one of the most disgusting kind of vicious things that I've seen in electoral politics."

Coady refused to comment when *Street Spirit* contacted her at Options Recovery Services, where she is medical director.

The No on S/Stand Up for the Right to Sit Down campaign ran a campaign intent on winning at the polls, but also with the goal of talking directly to the public so they would better understand the reasons people end up living on the streets and the reasons laws that strip people of their civil liberties aren't a solution to economic problems or homelessness.

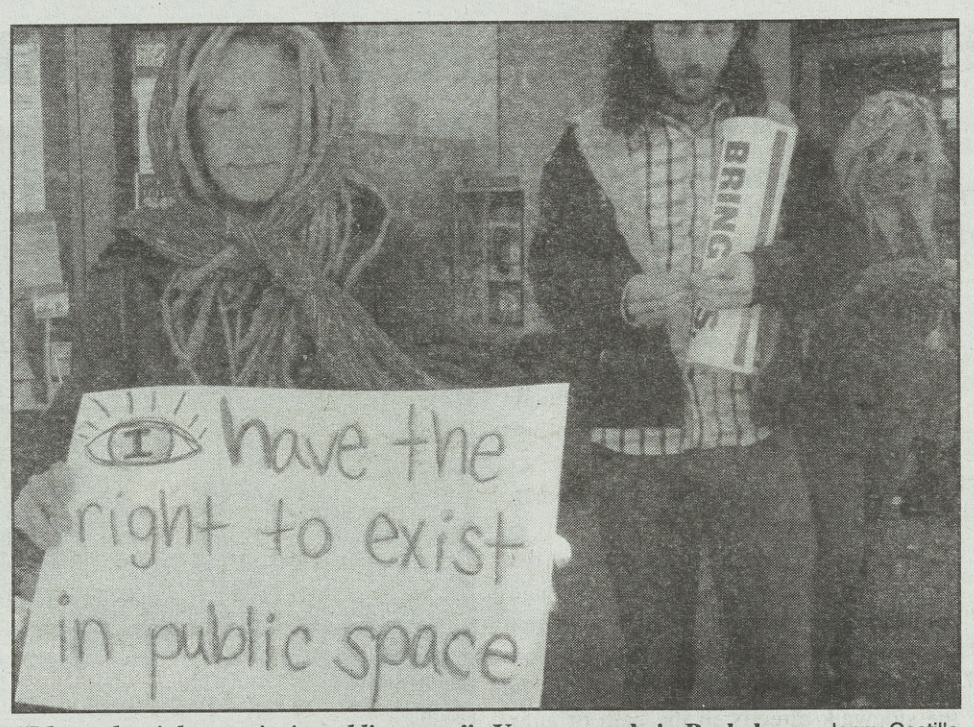
Supporters of the No on S campaign volunteered their time to not only speak with the public, but also organized protests and creative events to get the message out to Berkeley voters.

"We knew that just standing on the moral high ground and waving at people wouldn't work — that it had to be more than that — so we tried to educate people very specifically about who was on the streets and why," said Carol Denney, an independent journalist and homeless activist who spent countless hours working for the No on S campaign. Denney organized events and spoke to nearly 500 Berkeley businesses about Measure S.

A lack of understanding of the multiple reasons why people become homeless is a huge impediment to finding real solutions, City Councilmember Arreguin said.

"It's not just street youth," Arreguin said. "It's veterans, people who have substance abuse problems, people who have mental health issues. It's families, and a very diverse group of people and people who are on the streets for different reasons.

"I think fundamentally the problem with Measure S is that it was put on the ballot without any real analysis of the problems, without any data, without any discussion of alternatives, but even more so, without a real fundamental understanding about who are the homeless in Berkeley."



"I have the right to exist in public space." **Young people in Berkeley worked to defeat a measure that would have outlawed sitting in public.** Janny Castillo photo

Although the defeat of Measure S is cause for celebration, homeless advocates and service providers now want to turn the attention of city officials to finding solutions to the real causes of homelessness and to create the housing and shelters needed in Berkeley.

"Now let's take that energy that we had to use just tearing our hair out trying to fight this thing — let's take that energy and do something wonderful," said Sally Hindman, executive director of Youth Spirit Artworks, who is currently fighting to get additional funding to expand her program that helps low-income and homeless youth in Berkeley.

"We fought off something negative and that's never optimal," Hindman said. "I would have preferred to have had the hundreds of hours that I had to put into fighting that, and all of us had to put into it, I would have preferred that be focused right from the start on something that we knew would work. There are still 400 homeless youth on the streets and couches of Berkeley on any given night and that hasn't changed. So let's roll up our sleeves and get going. We've got work to do."

Homeless activist Denney said that while she was disheartened that the dehumanizing ordinance even made its way to the voters, she hopes that the work done by the Stand Up for the Right to Sit Down coalition will serve as a guide and source of inspiration for those who have to fight against anti-homeless laws in other cities.

"I worry for this town and this country that this happened at all," Denney said. "On the other hand, what I think we just did successfully as a group — the group that opposed Measure S — was create a model for other communities with similar undemocratic power bases trying to rob other people of civil rights."

Arreguin echoed this in saying, "I think Berkeley really can be a leader and can be a model for how we can come together to develop solutions to address homelessness. The next steps are equally important as what happened with Measure S."

Referring to the headline of *Street Spirit's* story on Measure S in its November issue, "Berkeley's Choice: Compassion or Repression," Hindman said, "I think that the voters took up *Street Spirit* on their challenge of repression versus compassion. I think that compassion won out. People want to do something positive. They don't want to do something cruel that's going to be punitive. They brought their best selves to the polls in that regard."

Fiscal Cliff Threatens Federal Housing and Poverty Programs

by Lynda Carson

The Berkeley Housing Authority administers about 1,939 subsidized rental-housing units for low-income families through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program and the Moderate Rehabilitation SRO Program.

Unless the Obama administration and Congress come up with a new plan to avoid what is called the "fiscal cliff," disastrous, across-the-board spending cuts to non-defense programs are scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 2, 2013. Federal programs affecting the working class, elderly, disabled and the poor could lose billions of dollars in funding in 2013.

These looming cutbacks may never be imposed if legislators back away from the cliff, as many expect to happen. But if the cuts do occur, poor people will suffer great harm. The 8.2 percent spending cuts would damage poverty programs, homeless programs, public housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly called Section 8 vouchers).

Low-income tenants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program pay 30 to 40 percent of their monthly income for rent, and the rest of the rent is paid to the landlord by the voucher from the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The spending cuts threaten at least 250,000 voucher holders with eviction, if automatic spending cuts go into effect on Jan. 2, 2013, as scheduled.

The so-called "fiscal cliff" is the combination of Bush-era tax cuts about to expire, and massive, across-the-board spending cuts (sequestration) that could total $800 billion next year, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

Sequestration is a term to describe the implementation of mandatory spending cuts in the federal budget, such as automatic, across-the-board cuts that take place when annual budget deficits occur.

The expected outcome of sequestration could add up to $110 billion in spending cuts in 2013, according to CBO estimates, unless Congress and the White House take action to stop the automatic cuts.

A CBO forecast predicted that if a new budget agreement is not reached, automatic spending cuts could cause a new recession with 9.1 percent unemployment, and the Congressional Research Service predicted a loss of 1.4 million jobs next year.

Locally, the Berkeley Housing Authority continues negotiations to privatize 75 public housing units by selling them to out-of-state billionaires Jorge M. Perez and Stephen M. Ross of the Related Companies of California, LLC.

Some of Berkeley's public housing tenants face pressure to trade in their public housing townhouses for federally subsidized Housing Choice Vouchers. Rep. Dick Norman, Democrat from Washington state and the ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee, wrote on Oct. 9, 2012, that if sequestration takes effect, 200,000 voucher holders may be evicted from subsidized housing across the nation.

Furthermore, Rep. Norman writes that in some markets, the income provided by Section 8 tenants wouldn't be replaced by new tenants, and landlords would lose income as a result. Norman also stated that cuts to the Homeless Assistant Grant account would result in approximately 100,000 more people on the streets if sequestration goes into effect.

However, in their own assessment of the situation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 250,000 voucher holders will lose their housing if sequestration takes effect, resulting in nearly one million people losing their federal housing assistance and being placed at risk of homelessness.

According to the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), about 303,499 seniors rely on Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for affordable housing. Also, Section 8 housing is home to 458,124 households with one or more disabled family member. In addition, 59 percent of Section 8 households are families with children (more than 2,357,977 children in total), with an average annual family income of $11,049.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, $17.37 billion will be needed to fully renew the 2,130,000 vouchers they estimated are being used by low-income families in 2011.

The 8.2 percent in spending cuts (sequestration) scheduled to kick in on Jan. 2, 2013, would make it much more difficult for public housing authorities to administer subsidized housing programs.

Activists are urging low-income families in federally subsidized housing to contact their representatives, and to urge the Obama administration and Congress to stop the automatic spending cuts that could result in the eviction of 250,000 voucher holders in HUD housing programs.

Berkeley's Finest Moment: The Defeat of Measure S

Commentary by Daniel McMullan

I remember Measures N and O in Berkeley, the anti-homeless ordinances of 20 years ago. The crowd was so big that we had to hold the City Council meeting at the Berkeley High Auditorium. The lies they told back then seemed slicker. Today they just say anything — any lie will do.

Even on the night after the election, Gina Cova was writing for the *Daily Cal* that Measure S was aimed at "sidewalk encampments," not just the simple act of sitting. Yet sidewalk encampments have been illegal for quite some time under ordinance 647 (e) P.C.

That's a penal code I know only too well. I'd love to have it on my tombstone: *"Finally. I'm not violating 647 (e) any more."* But let's be real. I'm too poor for a decent burial.

This year they had a Measure N and O on the ballot, too. It was about taking care of Berkeley's pools. It failed. It failed for one reason: "Where would Berkeley politics be without Dirty Pool?"

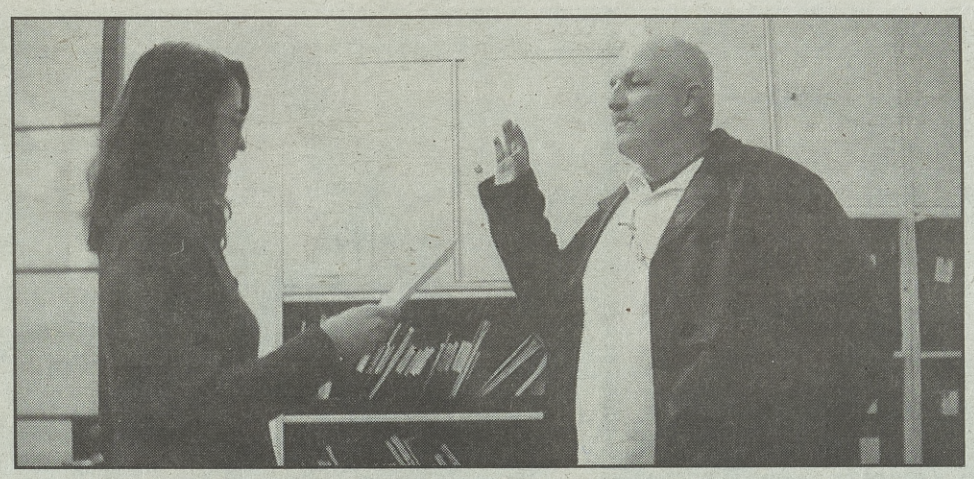
But when it came to the Yes on S group, things got as dirty as it gets.

It's hard for me to imagine how Berkeley's business people keep falling for this same one-trick pony. Instead of doing some real work, let's blame people sitting, and people with no homes —again!!

What real work, you ask?

Maybe try including the people of Berkeley, for starters. We all care about where we live, not just where we sell.

I can think of dozens of things to bring people back to Telegraph Avenue. People came to Telegraph for that fabled vibe — one of its best parts being its street musicians. Telegraph Avenue should hold a "Telegraph World Street Musician Competition." Every year. Close off the street, let people walk around, listen to the musicians, check out the vendors.



Dan McMullan is sworn in as a Berkeley Commissioner on the Human Welfare and Community Action Commission on Nov. 26, 2012. Cassandra Blau photo

Look at the state of Haste and Telegraph today. When Andy Ross attacked the poor on behalf of business and profits, he started a trend that continues to burden Telegraph with some bad, bad Karma.

Let us bring back the best of that old vibe and help those in need with some genuine good will and imagination.

A lot of people sitting around are poor people that have places to stay, but they cost so much that they have no money left to do anything. Why not a program in cooperation with local businesses that gives these people credits for time they put in volunteering in Berkeley? These credits can be used to go to movies, get something to eat, get items they need, etc.

I would also like to develop something I call *"E.T. (Errant Teenager) phone home."* That puts kids on the streets in touch with their families.

These are just a few things on my mind, but they sure beat the lame scapegoating and negative impressions our business leaders have been killing us with.

Try getting some new, more positive and nicer people to head the Telegraph Business Improvement District and the Downtown Berkeley Association. People who are willing to do great things and stop moaning about how bad these places are. Who could read their whining and ever want to buy what they are selling??

John Caner is the director of the Downtown Berkeley Association and was a major supporter of Measure S. Why would Caner, who owns a huge hilltop villa in Sonoma, want to begrudge some poor person a piece of sidewalk?

Then we come to Dr. Davida Coady of Options Recovery Services. On election day, she reportedly sent Options clients over to John Caner's place to pick up Yes on S literature to pass out at voting stations. Homeless people asking voters to criminalize homeless people? These are people that Coady often holds the power over — the power of the legal system.

Many Options people are the very ones that would get tickets if Measure S had passed, but they are too afraid to say no, and they were too afraid to say no when Dr. Coady (fearing a loss in her power to jail people?) came out against Prop. 36, the law that gave first-time drug offenders the option to go to a real treatment program, rather than jail, for drug possession.

Why was someone who runs a recovery program so opposed to a proposition that supports and provides funding for recovery programs? And now, Options Recovery Services has no problem with sucking up all that Prop. 36 money.

When I think of laws that criminalize sitting, I am reminded of Kevin Freeman, a homeless man murdered in a Santa Rita jail cell. His crime? Being poor. Through the model that criminalizes poor people, he should have left town. But he didn't.

So Kevin needed some more jailing. Enough jailing to end up getting his brains splattered all over a jail cell by a homicidal prisoner. That got him off our sidewalks for good. I knew Kevin as a gentle, generous man. I'm still mad about, and sad about, what happened to him.

That's why I want to thank you, Berkeley. Thank you for seeing through the B.S. surrounding S.

As City Councilman Jesse Arreguin said, Berkeley's spirit is better than this law. And some said he was naive. But no, he was right, and the defeat of Measure S was one of Berkeley's finest moments. Now let's get on to some real work.

Dan McMullan is the coordinator of the Disabled People Outside Project. Please donate clothes, coats, sleeping bags, and blankets to the Disabled People Outside Project. Call (510) 684-5866 or donate at http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/Disabled_People_Outside_Project

A Family's Disturbing Encounter with Berkeley Police

Imagine coming to visit friends in Berkeley and being tackled, torn from your family's side, and forced to spend the night in a psychiatric ward without charge or explanation.

by Carol Denney

Some of Berkeley's commercial districts are echoing canyons of empty storefronts. Real estate companies boast of the town's amenities, but blame the presence of homeless people and panhandlers for the empty commercial spaces which burden the town year after year. Yet, their own refusal to lower rental rates probably plays the primary role in discouraging new commercial tenants.

The Berkeley City Council currently has three members who opposed Measure S, the anti-sitting law targeting the poor which failed to get popular support at the polls, but none of Berkeley's councilmembers have spoken out yet about an issue making Berkeley's commercial districts discouraging and even dangerous for everybody — poor people and shoppers alike — police misconduct.

Police misconduct is being ignored as a community-wide problem in Berkeley.

The police are currently misusing a decades-old law — an ordinance originally designed to keep storeowners' merchandise from cluttering the sidewalk — against pedestrians themselves who set down a backpack or bag of belongings.

This misuse of Section 14.48.020 is in complete violation of the law's intent and its exemption for personal belongings. Discrimination appears to be playing a role in the law's misuse, and appears to be playing a role in additional incidents, such as the following story.

Try to imagine coming across the Bay with your family to visit friends in Berkeley and being suddenly tackled, torn from your family's side, and forced to spend the night in a psychiatric facility without charge or explanation. Would you ever come back to visit?

Hila Sulme and her son, both residents of San Francisco, visited friends one Sunday in Berkeley, then stopped by the downtown library before walking back to their car on Center Street. It was Nov. 18, 2012, around 6:00 p.m.

They were on Center Street near the game store when Berkeley bike officer Eric Keen zoomed around the corner and grabbed Ms. Sulme's son, taking him to the ground and handcuffing him. Another Berkeley police officer, Heather Cole, was present as well. A man who claimed to have reported a crime stood nearby watching as Ms. Sulme's son was handcuffed on the public sidewalk.

Neither Ms. Sulme nor her son had any idea what was going on. They had witnessed no crime or incident during their day, and had never had any encounter with either police officer before.

Ms. Sulme asked the young man who claimed to have reported them to the police to step back and give them some privacy, but Officer Keen objected, stating "he has the right to stand here."

Ms. Sulme said that she was the mother of the young man being arrested. Officer Keen asked how old her son was, and when she told him that he was 18, Keen responded that she then had no rights, and needed to get a power of attorney.

Ms. Sulme tried her best to inform the police officers that her son had unique medical issues and that they needed to listen to her regarding his condition, but she was dismissed by both officers, who suggested that an ambulance would be called and the emergency medical technicians would evaluate her son.

Officer Heather Cole then made a strange comment, accusing Ms. Sulme of being sarcastic as she tried to explain the complex medical circumstances facing her son, circumstances which she, as his mother, as a nurse, and as someone with training in special education, was in a position to clarify.

Ms. Sulme denied that she was being sarcastic, and when the officers continued to resist allowing her to tell them anything about her son's medical issues, said that she felt they were both being unprofessional and unethical. Neither officer had any interest in what she had to say and claimed they had no obligation to listen to her.

Her son was now seated on the sidewalk against the game store wall, and the officers forced a Starbucks cup into his handcuffed hands behind his back, which she could only presume was an effort to take his fingerprints. It had become clear at this point that the officers were responding to a report on the vandalism of a car near the library on Allston Way and assumed that her son, who had never left her side, was responsible.

Ms. Sulme's son had no cuts or glass anywhere on his body which might link him to any car vandalism when the ambulance took him away. But, after spending the night sleeping on the floor of John George Psychiatric Pavilion in San Leandro, he had a bruise on his arm from being hit by one of the patients.

Ms. Sulme got through to a physician at the facility who was baffled that her son had been sent there in the first place, commenting that not only did the psychiatric placement make no sense, and also adding that the setting was dangerous for her son because of his medical issues.

Which is exactly what Ms. Sulme had been trying to tell Officer Keen and Officer Cole, the bike officers so eager to have her son swept off the street into an ambulance and out of sight.

Neither she nor her son have any idea whether or not he will be charged with a crime. All she was given as her son was taken away was a case number.

Ms. Sulme and her son remain baffled by their mistreatment. They've received no citation or charges of any crime at the time of this writing, nor have they received any apology or explanation from the police officers or the department regarding the bizarre events of that day.

Officer Jennifer Coats, the Berkeley Police Department's public information officer, responded to my request for an official explanation by claiming that Ms. Sulme's son was never taken to the ground, and that an eyewitness had identified him as having broken a car window.

She also stated that a mobile crisis team had been called and had arranged for psychiatric observation. She had no comment on the officers' having forced a Starbucks cup into the handcuffed hands of Ms. Sulme's son.

The next time you see someone surrounded by police on the streets of Berkeley, please consider simply standing by as a witness. The 10 minutes you spend observing might end up being of crucial assistance to an innocent person. It also might clarify at least one reason why many people avoid coming to this city for a visit.

Bringing Dr. King's Message to a New Generation

"The way Kingian nonviolence has been handed down to us is that it's essentially Dr. Martin Luther King's final marching orders." — Kazu Haga

Kazu Haga *(left)* holds a nonviolence workshop in the East Bay Meditation Center as Courtney Supple and Rebecca Speert listen.

by Terry Messman

Over the past year, the Positive Peace Warrior Network has conducted workshops in the strategy, philosophy and ethical values of "Kingian Nonviolence" for more than one thousand people — including high-school students, grandparents, prisoners in local jails, young people of color living in dangerous neighborhoods, Occupy activists, and organizers involved in many social change movements.

The Positive Peace Warrior Network (PPWN) defines "Positive Peace" as peace with justice for all because Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught that "peace is not only the absence of violence, but the presence of justice."

I first became aware of the work of PPWN organizers Jonathan Lewis and Kazu Haga during last winter's Occupy movement when they played a highly principled role by advocating for nonviolent social change at a time of great controversy over tactics in Occupy. In the next few months, PPWN organizers gave workshops in Kingian Nonviolence to a total of about 300 Occupy activists, including people active with Occupy Oakland, Occupy San Francisco, Occupy Seattle, Occupy Providence and Occupy Wall Street.

Now, in the Bay Area, the Occupy movement has apparently fallen into one of those low ebbs that seem to occur periodically throughout the history of social-change movements. Yet, the Positive Peace Warrior Network and many other groups are still working with great dedication to keep the spirit of justice alive.

The dedication of people like Kazu Haga and Jonathan Lewis gives the lie to one of the most deceptive media myths of our era. This prevalent myth holds that even though countercultural youth rose up in rebellion to war and racism in the 1960s, the fiery spirit that once animated their dissent has long since been extinguished and is now irrelevant.

This myth has clouded our vision and made us believe that young people see the civil rights and peace movements as historical curiosities and little more. Yet those of us who have attended high-spirited events organized by the Positive Peace Warrior Network in the Bay Area have witnessed groups of fired-up and dedicated young activists describe their own work for human rights and peace and justice.

Perhaps that should not come as such a surprise, given the fantastic organizing by thousands of young activists this past year that created one of the most significant social-change movements of our time — the Occupy movement. Even though Occupy has, at least temporarily, lost some of its energy and sense of direction, the young people who gave birth to it are still doing the very serious work of reflection and analysis and movement building.

One dedicated organizer still working to build a stronger and more principled movement is Kazu Haga, 31, a Japanese-American activist who was trained in nonviolent resistance by his mentors, Dr. Bernard Lafayette and Jonathan Lewis.

As a key organizer of the Positive Peace Warrior Network, Kazu has conducted workshops in Kingian Nonviolence for several hundred activists this past year, including such disparate groups as academics and anarchists, faith leaders and prisoners, senior citizens and high-school students, longtime activists and those who have never attended a demonstration.

The message of Kingian Nonviolence can be traced in an historical line from the civil rights organizers of the Southern freedom movement in the 1950s, through the anti-Vietnam War struggles of the 1960s, on through the anti-nuclear and anti-apartheid movements of the 1980s, all the way to today's young Occupy activists.

Martin Luther King's vision of the beloved community helped to inspire all of those movements, and Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Kazu Haga and Jonathan Lewis formed the Positive Peace Warrior Network to pass that all-important message on to the next generation.

On the morning of April 4, 1968, a few hours before his assassination, Martin Luther King met with Bernard Lafayette at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis to discuss strategic details of the Poor People's Campaign they were planning. At the end of the meeting, King abruptly shifted gears and told Lafayette of a vitally important new mission that he saw as the next step for the movement.

On his last morning on earth, Rev. King said: "Now, Bernard, the next movement we're going to have is to institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence." That one momentous sentence set the course for Dr. Lafayette's entire life.

In the aftermath of King's assassination, his last words echoed with such fateful significance that Lafayette made it his life's work to carry the message of nonviolence to the world. In an interview with *Street Spirit,* Dr. Lafayette explained the deeper meaning of his life's work: "The reason I went and prepared myself for this work is because I wanted to make sure that those who attempted to assassinate Martin Luther King's dream — missed."

In the decades since King's murder, Lafayette has conducted nonviolent trainings for thousands of activists all over the world, taught courses in nonviolent conflict resolution in universities and seminaries, and created peace education programs in the academic world.

Kazu Haga is one of the thousands of people who have attended Dr. Lafayette's nonviolence training. In an interview with *Street Spirit*, Kazu said, "The way Kingian Nonviolence has been handed down to us is that it's essentially Dr. Martin Luther King's final marching orders."

The Positive Peace Warrior Network has worked especially hard to ensure that the youth of today learn about the philosophy and vision of Kingian Nonviolence.

In Chicago, the PPWN conducted nonviolence trainings in North Lawndale College Prep High School, resulting in the school reporting a 90 percent reduction in violence since they began working with them.

In Oakland, the PPWN has worked with low-income and at-risk youth, including those who were gang-involved, formerly incarcerated, or homeless. Jonathan and Kazu have worked with a collaborative of youth organizations — including Youth Spirit Artworks, BAY-Peace, and Youth Alive — to introduce Kingian Nonviolence into the ongoing work of those groups.

Sally Hindman, executive director of Youth Spirit Artworks in Berkeley, said that their workshops in nonviolence have been tremendously helpful to the youth in her group who live in dangerous neighborhoods where street violence and police repression are ever-present realities.

"The Positive Peace Warrior Network has been transformative for the lives of our youth," she said. "It really turned their way of thinking upside down. They were just completely enthralled by the training."

Hindman said the youth in her group had been turned off by nonviolent trainings given by more "middle-class" organizations and found them alienating and irrelevant. But Kazu Haga and Jonathan Lewis spoke to the youth in their own language so they could really relate to them.

"Kazu and Jonathan have been around the block," Hindman said. "They know from their own experience what nonviolence is about, and they know what life on the street is about. They totally get it. So when they talk to our youth, they're completely coming from the place our youth are coming from. It's the difference between night and day."

One of the most powerful insights the youth gained was a fresh way of looking at the vision and commitment of Dr. King.

" I think our youth were blown away by this fresh analysis and this fresh approach to talking about who Dr. King was," said Hindman. "I think Martin Luther King gets served up to all of us now in a very sanitized way that even Republicans can use.

"But Jonathan and Kazu are bringing Dr. King back to life. They're really talking about what King has to say that can change the lives of youth right now, and he is calling them to radical nonviolence to save a whole population of young people."

As a young man, David Hartsough took part in the lunch counter sit-ins in the early days of the civil rights movement, and he marched with Martin Luther King and Ralph David Abernathy. Later, as a staff organizer for the American Friends Service Committee, Hartsough conducted countless nonviolent trainings himself.

At present, Hartsough is the director of Peaceworkers and the cofounder of Nonviolent Peace Force, and he has already experienced nearly every variation of nonviolence training imaginable.

Yet Hartsough was so inspired by the workshop in Kingian Nonviolence given by Jonathan and Kazu, that he has taken their training *twice* in the past year.

Hartsough said, "Kazu is a young person of color who has been very active in the Occupy movement's people of color caucus and the young people's caucus and the nonviolence caucus. I think he has been doing everything he can to infuse an understanding of nonviolence in the broader movement. Kazu has taken seriously what Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi and other nonviolent leaders have said throughout history, that for movements to be powerful — not only morally powerful but also strategically effective — it's important to operate from a very clear and strong nonviolent perspective."

Hartsough said he especially appreciated Kazu's role last winter when Occupy Oakland was undergoing deep divisions between those who advocated nonviolence and those calling for a "diversity of tactics."

"What is really impressive is that Kazu is not just studying King, but putting his life into helping deepen the understanding of Kingian Nonviolence by people in the movement," Hartsough said. "He is doing all this to follow his conscience and his heart and put nonviolence into practice.

Asked to name the people who have most inspired him, Kazu quickly lists Martin Luther King, Bernard Lafayette, and his mother Maoko, who gave him a belief in compassion and service. Another inspiration is Nichidatsu Fujii (known as Fujii Guruji) a Japanese Buddhist monk who founded Nipponzan Myohoji, a Buddhist order known for its work in building Peace Pagodas and going on peace pilgrimages all over the world.

When he was 17, Kazu was adrift on the streets until the monks and nuns of Nipponzan Myohoji "took me under their wing." He traveled with them to India and lived in their monastic order for a year and a half, doing everything from heavy construction work while building Peace Pagaodas, to peace walks in Cambodia, and volunteer work in Sri Lanka.

The experience was formative in the young man's life. "That's how I came into all this work in nonviolence," he said of his involvement with the Buddhist order.

Kazu talks with great enthusiasm about the unfinished work of transforming the world into the "beloved community" that Martin Luther King dreamed of creating.

This is how a legacy is entrusted to a new generation: Martin Luther King gave his very life to spreading the message of nonviolence. Bernard Lafayette picked up the fallen torch of Kingian Nonviolence after King was murdered, and passed it on as a living legacy to Jonathan Lewis and Kazu Haga. Now Jonathan and Kazu are on a mission to offer a vision of the beloved community to the next generation.

Building the Positive Peace Warrior Network

Bay Area activists are dedicated to spreading the vision of Kingian Nonviolence

The *Street Spirit* Interview with Kazu Haga

Interview by Terry Messman

Street Spirit: *What led you to make Martin Luther King's vision of nonviolent movement building such a central part of your activism and your life?*

Kazu Haga: I took my first two-day training in Kingian Nonviolence in the fall of 2008 from Jonathan Lewis when I was living in Oakland. We were both working with an organization called The Gathering for Justice founded by Harry Belafonte. Kingian nonviolence was to be one of the core strategies for that group.

So I took the workshop from Jonathan and I told him at the time that this philosophy was something that I always knew but just didn't have the language to articulate. Jonathan Lewis had already been working with Bernard Lafayette for about 10 years at that point.

So after I took that training, it was weighing heavily on my mind, and then about two months later, Oscar Grant was shot. *[Editor's note: Grant, an African-American man, was fatally shot by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle in the early morning on New Year's Day 2009 at the Fruitvale BART Station.]*

I ended up on the steering committee of the Coalition Against Police Executions (CAPE) which was doing all the mobilizations after the shooting.

So this philosophy of nonviolence was really heavy on my mind during that whole campaign and I really started to see how the anger and, at times, the hatred that was within the movement was starting to impact our work. The internal dynamics of our movement were starting to have an effect on the external impacts of the campaign.

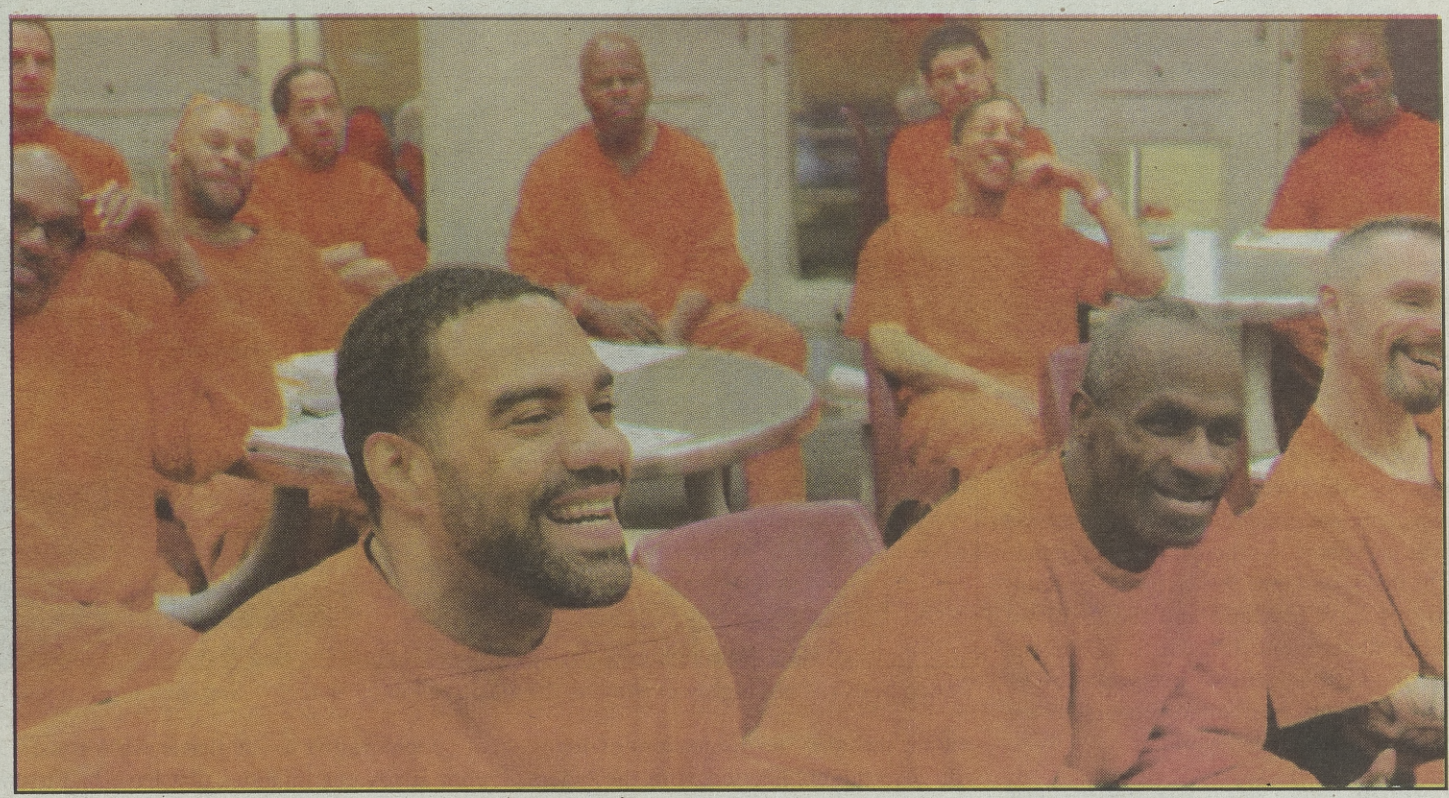
Spirit: *What effect did anger or hatred have on the movement, in your view?*

Kazu: I really started to see how a movement that's largely driven by anger ultimately kind of eats itself up. What happened internally in the movement is that there was a lot of turmoil within the organizers and a lot of arguing and a lot of friction that really tore the Oscar Grant movement apart. The steering committee of CAPE eventually just collapsed because of that internal turmoil.

I also started to see how a lot of the anger which was righteous anger — and everybody clearly had a right to be angry — was being targeted straight at Johannes Mehserle. I felt like this was an issue that was so much bigger than Mehserle, and the more we focused on Johannes Mehserle, the more we were letting the system off the hook. As one of our strategies, we can hold Mehserle accountable as an individual, but also attack the larger system that creates people like Mehserle.

Spirit: *It has always been an important part of the analysis of nonviolent movements that you resist the injustice of an oppressive system, rather than simplistically targeting individuals.*

Kazu: Always, individuals are not the enemy. Injustice is the enemy. And it's not about any one individual, but it's about being able to develop strategies that address the root of the injustice. I always say that if it wasn't Johannes Mehserle, it would have been another cop. That's just the way the system works.



Smiles light up the faces of men at the San Bruno County Jail as they listen to a workshop by Kazu Haga and Jonathan Lewis.

Spirit: *Since then, you and Jonathan Lewis have become leaders in the Positive Peace Warrior Network, spreading Dr. King's vision of nonviolence far and wide. What is the long-term vision of the Positive Peace Warrior Network?*

Kazu: It's an organization that is trying to create a culture of long-lasting, positive peace through the institutionalization of nonviolence. We believe that a lot of our social movements today focus on how to create policy change and structural change. That's really important and we need to train ourselves so we can do that better.

But ultimately, it's a cultural shift that we need in this country. You can create the best system of governance that you can possibly create, but if the culture of the people is so corrupt, then they are going to corrupt that system. So our long-term goal is not only to train people in how to change policy, but also how to change cultures and how to reprioritize our values as a society.

Our training really addresses both of those things. It addresses how to build sustainable movements that create long-term, systemic change, but also how to change how we relate to each other as people, how we handle the conflicts that are internal to our families and to our movements. It's really about changing that culture of violence. It's not just a system change. It's not just a policy change. It's also a cultural change.

Spirit: *Many people embrace nonviolence as a tactic, but not as a way of life. Is your commitment to nonviolence a tactical commitment or a way of life?*

Kazu: It's absolutely a way of life.

Spirit: *Why?*

Kazu: Because what we need in this country is not just a change in our form of government, or a change in certain policies, but also a shift in values. We need a shift in how we respond to the conflicts in our lives. I think one of the problems is that we continue to justify the use of force and violence and fear and intimidation to make the changes that we want to see.

That's not just a tactical question. It's a moral question. It's an ethical question. It's a question about our principles as a society, and our values as a society. And to shift that, we need to be committed to nonviolence in a far deeper way than just how we're going to act when we're out in the streets protesting.

It's about how are we going to relate to each other as a people, and how are we going to respond to the conflicts that we may have between communities and between individuals. Until we address that question, we can continue to argue all we want over tactics, and over how to change policies and systems. But at the end of the day, we need to figure out how we can relate to each other better as human beings. To me, that's a question of principles. It's not merely a question of tactics.

> **"If we don't have leadership from men and women who are getting locked up, men and women who have been homeless, then ultimately, we will never be able to create sustained change. I feel like we need to start there."** — Kazu Haga

Spirit: *Is it true that you left a good job with the Peace Development Fund to pursue this nonviolent organizing full time? What was your role there and why did you leave that job?*

Kazu: I was at the Peace Development Fund for 10 years in their San Francisco office. Before that I had worked in their main office in Amherst, Massachusetts. I was the program director so I was overseeing our grantmaking program and I also managed several of our capacity-building initiatives which meant working with a network of organizations providing them with grants and trainings.

Spirit: *So why did you leave?*

Kazu: For me, it was really that I saw the potential of Kingian Nonviolence ever since I took that first training. We get this same comment a lot from people that go through our workshops. From the moment I took this training, I knew this had huge potential and this philosophy had to get out there to more people.

Spirit: *What was so eye-opening about the new insights you learned from your first Kingian training in 2008?*

Kazu: I gained such a better understanding of the way conflict works in our society — both on an interpersonal level, as well as social conflicts like police violence — and really such a better sense of how it is that we can move through those conflicts in a way that is actually effective.

One of my favorite quotes is by Marcus Raskin. Raskin said that the opportunity for revolutionary change happens in the blink of an eye, and if you miss those moments, it's gone. *[Editor's note: Raskin was a founder of the Institute for Policy Studies and an early opponent of the Vietnam War. He was indicted with Dr. Benjamin Spock and William Sloane Coffin for conspiracy to aid draft resistance.]*

I felt like the Oscar Grant movement and the Occupy movement are moments when we could push for radical change — but our communities aren't prepared to capture those moments. I see the Kingian Nonviolence sessions as training our communities so that when these opportunities happen, we're ready to mobilize, we have a long-term analysis and we build long-term strategies, and we have a better sense of what needs to happen internally within the movement for it to be successful.

I've just been part of so many campaigns that weren't able to capture those moments, and that's really a shame.

Spirit: *What is the particular vision of Kingian Nonviolence?*

Kazu: The way Kingian Nonviolence has been handed down to us is that it's essentially Dr. Martin Luther King's final marching orders. He had a conversation with Dr. Bernard Lafayette before he was assassinated and he said the next movement they had to lead is to "institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence."

For all of us doing Kingian Nonviolence work, I think our goal is to ensure that Dr. King's legacy is alive with us, so that when that bullet was fired into his chest, they missed the target. King had a vision that this philosophy that he was starting to develop could be effective not just in the struggle against segregation, but also in the struggle against militarism, in the struggle against economic injustice, and in how we deal with any sort of conflict as a society.

The more we can prepare people to lead these movements, and the more we can give people an understanding of how to respond to the conflicts in our lives and in our society, the closer we can get to King's vision of the beloved community. It's about keeping that legacy alive and educating more people about how we can deal with conflict in an effective way.

Spirit: *What do those words "the beloved community" mean to you? In King's vision, what is the nature of the beloved community we're striving towards?*

Kazu: It's a community that has justice for all people, and where all relationships have been reconciled. As much as I love the

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99% framing in the Occupy movement, I think that's not a framing that King would have ultimately supported, because our vision of the beloved community includes a reconciled relationship even with those we call the 1% right now. We need to recognize that there are members of the 1% that are supportive of Occupy, as well as members of the 99% that are not supportive.

So it's never about pointing the finger and saying, "Those people are the problem," as much as recognizing the injustice in that situation, and saying, "That's the problem." And how can we address the injustice while winning over more friendships with the group that we've considered to be the enemy. So the beloved community is the 1% and the 99%. It's the community of East Oakland and the Oakland police department. It's the Iraqi citizens and the U.S. citizens — everyone having come to some reconciled process so we can live in a balanced world.

Spirit: *What role, if any, did Bernard Lafayette play in your becoming involved in nonviolent organizing? Did you ever go through trainings with him?*

Kazu: Dr. Lafayette is the coauthor with David Jehnsen of the Kingian nonviolence curriculum, so I met him indirectly when I met Jonathan Lewis.

[Editor's note: In 1990, David Jehnsen and Bernard Lafayette published "The Leaders Manual — A Structured Guide and Introduction to Kingian Nonviolence: The Philosophy and Methodology." It has been called the most authentic educational and training text about King's philosophy and strategies of nonviolence.]

Right when the Oscar Grant movement was going on, I felt instantly that if I could articulate better the philosophy of Kingian Nonviolence and really pass those lessons on, then we could have a more effective movement. So that summer, I attended the two-week summer institute that is held every year at the University of Rhode Island. This is where people come to get trained to become certified trainers in Kingian Nonviolence.

Spirit: *Isn't the University of Rhode Island where Dr. Lafayette originated a peace and nonviolent studies program?*

Kazu: Yes, he set up what is called the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies there. I went there and I studied under Dr. Lafayette for two weeks — two weeks of 14-hour days. Before taking this training, I used to think, like a lot of people, that nonviolence was essentially about turning the other cheek and not throwing a punch. But obviously we were not going to spend 100 hours exploring different ways to turn the other cheek *[laughing]*.

So as a result of this session, I really understood the depth of the philosophy of nonviolence. I had the opportunity to spend those two weeks learning from Dr. Lafayette and I've since had the opportunity to train with him on several occasions in different communities.

Spirit: *How did the intensive study of nonviolence affect you on a personal level?*

Kazu: For me, as a Japanese person that grew up in Massachusetts, it's amazing to now feel like I'm part of the continuing legacy of Dr. King's work. Sometimes I'm doing a workshop in a jail, or I remember one time I was doing a workshop with some kids in Selma, Alabama, where King worked, and I was amazed at how I ended up in that position — talking about King's legacy to a bunch of kids in Selma.

A lot of times what happens with youth development work is that, in an effort to empower young people, and to tell young people that they're the leaders of today, you lose the connection with the elders. So the message is that young people can do it on their own, and they don't want or need the elders — and I vehemently disagree with that.

Young activists get highly excited as the Positive Peace Warrior Network holds a spirited discussion of Kingian Nonviolence.

Spirit: *Why do you disagree? In activist circles, we tend to almost idolize the role of youth in building movements.*

Kazu: I think that people like Dr. Lafayette have learned so much — both what worked and what hasn't worked — and I think it's our responsibility to learn from them and to continue their legacy so that we can take our struggles one step further than what they did.

You know, I've kind of come to terms with the fact that the idea I have of the beloved community is not something that I'm going to see in my lifetime, and I'm okay with that. Which means that my role is to get up as close as we can to that vision so that the next generation can take it a little bit further and the generation after that can take it a little bit further.

It's like a relay race. So in that sense, we have a responsibility to learn everything we can from the past generation so that we're not starting where they did, but we're starting where they left off. So it's always a privilege for me to work with and learn from our elders in that way.

Spirit: *The vision and strategies of Martin Luther King's Poor People's Campaign in 1968 seem very close to the Occupy movement that began last year.*

Kazu: Absolutely

Spirit: *What major parallels do you see between these two movements and what do you see as the differences?*

Kazu: A lot of people don't know this, but in the last speech King gave in Memphis the night before he was assassinated, he was actually calling on people to move their money out of big banks and move it into local financial institutions.

In the Poor People's Campaign, they were organizing the Resurrection City and they were calling on poor people all over the country to come camp out in Washington, D.C. That encampment was to be used as a hub of operations to shut down the entire city. So I think, tactically, there are a lot of similarities with Occupy.

Later on in King's life, he really started seeing the ties between racial injustice and economic injustice, and really was seeing how poor people throughout the country are impacted in very similar ways. I think that's what the Occupy movement was also trying to show, is that regardless of where you live in the country, regardless of what race you are, we're all impacted by these economic policies.

When the housing bubble popped, a lot of people started to see that it wasn't just poor Black communities that have had to deal with these issues forever, but that, at any given moment, they could also be impacted by these issues as well. So that's when you started to see the solidarity between all the different classes and the different races so that all the different communities started to come together in Occupy.

There are also some major differences between Occupy and the Poor People's Campaign — some *major* differences.

Spirit: *What are the major differences?*

Kazu: The idea that Occupy was a leaderless movement and how decentralized it was. That was very different from how they organized in the civil rights movement where they had very clear leadership and they also had very clear goals. That's one thing that campaigns in the civil rights movement were always very strategic about: being able to articulate very clearly the specific goal for each campaign.

Without specific goals, it's hard to build strategies and figure out what tactics are best to use. In Occupy, we spent a lot of time talking and arguing about tactics, and that created a lot of division in the movement. But we never even agreed on what the goal was. And tactics are something you use to get to a goal. So we were putting the cart in front of the horse, essentially, in arguing over tactics before we agreed on what the goals were. I think that was one of the main faults of Occupy and one of the main differences between the civil rights movement and Occupy.

Spirit: *I can think of other major differences too. First, the Poor People's Campaign had a breathtaking vision of trying to paralyze Washington, D.C., with massive nonviolent resistance until federal officials granted an Economic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged. Occupy built a large movement, but they didn't develop such an audacious strategy to win economic rights and overcome poverty.*

Second, the SCLC organized massive acts of civil disobedience, but they were deeply committed to nonviolence, whereas Occupy has often been unclear on this.

The third difference is that the Poor People's Campaign was based on organizing in poor communities all over the country, and mobilizing poor people to speak for themselves and act for themselves. But in Occupy, poor and homeless people often didn't feel welcomed and certainly were not given the central place of honor that King had intended.

Kazu: Yes, I agree. I think that was one of the other dangers of that 99% framing, because the 99% is a big umbrella and there's a lot of power dynamics within that 99% that I don't feel were properly addressed. Yeah, within Occupy there were always a lot of conversations about how to bridge that gap.

But I think because a lot of these issues were something that a lot of communities of color and low-income communities had already been dealing with *for hundreds of years*, so when different people started to speak out around Occupy issues, a lot of low-income communities were looking at it like, "Where have you all been?"

So now, when people within Occupy were asking why aren't poor people and communities of color coming to the general assemblies, I think a lot of it has to do with why weren't the folks that are active in Occupy involved in East Oakland and West Oakland beforehand. A lot of the homeless people that were sleeping in the camps were sleeping in camps *before* the Occupy camps started, and where were we in helping them when they were already feeling this repression?

There's a need for folks to really look at that history — a long history of colonialism and racism and injustice that have gone on for a long time in this country, from the founding of this nation. And without acknowledging that history, it's hard to ask, "Well, why aren't the poor people here?"

Spirit: *I first became aware of your work as a nonviolent organizer when a forum was held at a moment of great controversy last winter to discuss the two different directions confronting Occupy — nonviolence versus the diversity of tactics. In looking back now, what do you think about the importance of that forum?*

Kazu: Well, I don't know if we were successful in doing so, but one of the most important things about that forum was that we were really clear from the start that we didn't want to frame it as a *debate*. It was a *dialogue* to get to better understand each other's perspectives. I think that's essentially what we still need to do.

Obviously, I'm opposed to things like property destruction. But I really do believe in a dialogue with the people that are advocating those tactics. If they defined the vision of the society they're trying to create, and I defined the vision of the society I'm trying to create, I'm pretty sure it would be very similar.

So I think we really need to learn to identify what we have in common, as opposed to focusing constantly on where we differ. There are some real differences in ideology, in tactics and strategy. But if we can't first have the conversation about where we agree, we're always going to be arguing with each other, because we have no baseline level of trust.

One thing we were trying to do at that

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event was to offer both perspectives so that even if folks disagreed with our perspective, at least they could understand it — and vice versa. Within the nonviolent movement, there's often a tendency to rush to judgment anytime anyone identifies as an anarchist or even mentions that they believe that property destruction is a legitimate tactic. I happen to disagree with that, but that shouldn't automatically make me believe that they're an enemy to the movement or that there's no way we can work with them.

One goal of that event was to try to bridge that gap. Yes, we have differences and let's really articulate where our differences are, but let's also realize that we're all trying to build the same movement.

Spirit: *So the forum was the first step towards that. Did it accomplish that goal?*

Kazu: I don't believe it did, unfortunately. There were many factors involved, but I think ultimately we weren't successful in doing that. And you look at where Occupy Oakland is now, because that event was held by Occupy Oakland, and you really see all the divisions.

Spirit: *In those days of controversy over tactics in Occupy Oakland, you took a pretty visible public role in advocating nonviolence. In the "diversity of tactics" circles, that wasn't the most popular thing you could have done. So did you take some heat for publicly upholding nonviolence, and, if so, what did that feel like?*

Kazu: Absolutely, I took heat. Being an advocate for nonviolence in a place like Oakland, I've developed a really thick skin. I was taking a lot of heat ever since the Oscar Grant movement for advocating for these things. I think a lot of it has to do with misconceptions about what nonviolence is. But I've been booed, I've had things thrown at me, a lot of negative online posts and things like that *[laughing]*.

I've really had to learn to ignore Facebook discussion groups and online debates because I really feel like that's one of the main culprits of some of the divisions within Occupy — Facebook discussions and online discussions.

Spirit: *Why do you think online discussions tend to worsen these divisions?*

Kazu: Well, because I think human beings communicate with a whole lot more than just words. I think that things like tone and eye contact are so essential to our ability to communicate and understand each other, and when we take that away and we have these discussions on Facebook and the Internet, we say things to each other that we would never say to each other in person.

Spirit: *Because it's called Facebook, but it's really faceless.*

Kazu: Right, right *[laughing]*. It's anonymous, and so I think it's really dangerous. I've never seen a conflict successfully resolved through Facebook. Because the general assemblies weren't a place that was conducive to real dialogue, people turned to Facebook to try to hash out differences, and I think that's one of the worst places you could possibly try to do that.

Spirit: *What does it feel like to be attacked when you're just trying to do good work for a cause you really believe in?*

Kazu: Well, I've grown a really thick skin. And I understand that a lot of the people that criticize me, first of all, are doing so without a good understanding of what it is I'm actually advocating. But I also recognize that for every person that booed me, there's ten supporters out there, and my focus really has to be on them.

I think that anytime anybody speaks out for anything, you will have haters. Anytime you have success with anything, anytime you take a stand for anything, you're going to have haters. Anytime you take the lead for anything.

I remember Martin Luther King talking about all the dozens of death threats he would get all the time. It just comes with the nature of the work. Whether I'm taking a stand for nonviolence, or for the diversity of tactics, if I'm having success with my work, there's going to be people who criticize me. My focus has to be on the people that actually want to work with me.

Spirit: *What do you make of the argument for diversity of tactics, as espoused by some in the Occupy movement?*

Kazu: Well, first of all, I think that way of framing things is completely off. There's so much diversity within nonviolence that I think this argument between "nonviolence versus diversity of tactics" is completely wrong. Starhawk made a really good point about this conflict of diversity of tactics: Without some baseline agreement of what we're *not* going to do, then how far are we allowed to take it? Does that mean that we would legitimize torture, for example?

Spirit: *If we just blankly endorse any diversity of tactic imaginable, does that even allow for assassination?*

Kazu: Right. I'm sure that people who are using black-bloc tactics wouldn't agree with a lot of those things, so I think both sides can agree there's some limit to it. But the advocates for diversity of tactics really didn't allow for that conversation to take place.

Also, with a lot of the advocates for diversity of tactics, the anger that kind of guides some of their work is righteous anger and I think it's important to acknowledge that. I would almost rather see people out there breaking windows than people sitting at home doing nothing, and seeing all the injustices of the world and saying, "That's not my problem."

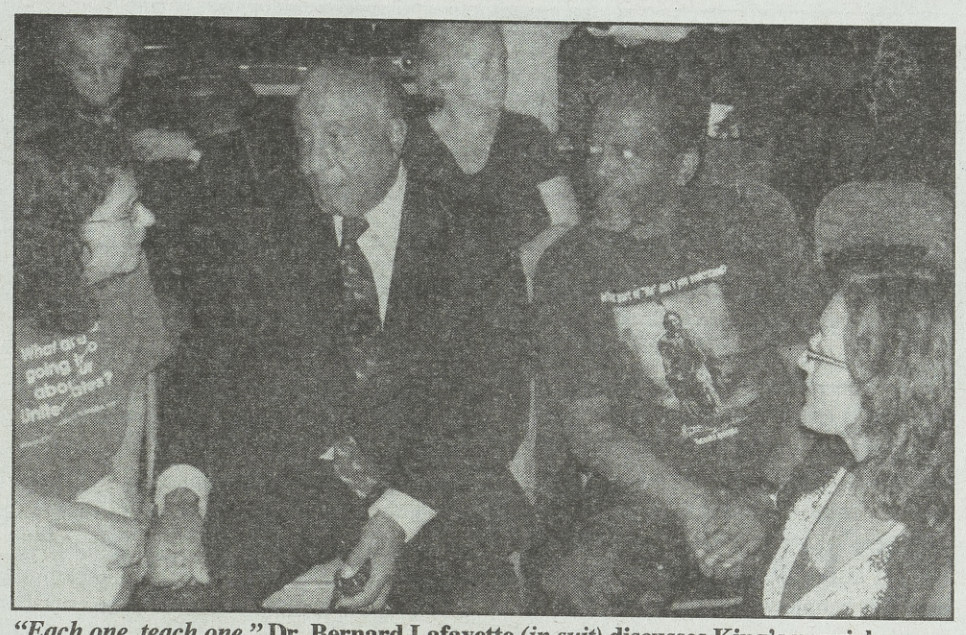
At least they're taking a stand and really putting their bodies on the line. So I think it's important to acknowledge those things that we do share in common, because one of the complaints that a lot of advocates for nonviolence get is that we're not out on the streets risking our bodies. I think we need to acknowledge the courage they do have, but be able to talk to them and have real dialogues about the differences in strategies and how those different strategies impact our movement.

Spirit: *Do you think that the property damage we're talking about — the rock-throwing and window-breaking and starting fires in downtown Oakland — is responsible for the divisiveness and loss of support that consumed Occupy Oakland? And, if so, do you believe the loss of public support caused by these actions may be irreparable?*

Kazu: Well, the first question: Yes, absolutely. Whether or not you agree with property destruction, the property destruction did help contribute to the loss of public support for our movement. When you're able to remain nonviolent even in the face of police violence, that paints a very clear picture of who is right and who is wrong.

There's a big difference between the images that we saw of the students at UC Davis who were getting pepper-sprayed and who were sitting there nonviolently, and the violence that happened at Occupy Oakland. That public narrative is a really powerful weapon for us, when we can show people that we are standing nonviolent and claiming that we're on the right side of justice. But when we engage in property destruction, then that narrative gets really complicated.

When we use militant tactics — whether those tactics are nonviolent or violent — then we need the support of the public. Because those who have the courage and the ability and the privilege to use those militant tactics — again, whether the tactics are nonviolent or not — are always going to be in the minority.



"Each one, teach one." **Dr. Bernard Lafayette** *(in suit)* **discusses King's nonviolence at a gathering held in Oakland by the Positive Peace Warrior Network.**

Learning how to confront violence, and learning how to become the antidote to violence, and the antidote to injustice, is a lifelong struggle.

There's always going to be those front-line soldiers in any movement who are willing and able to use those tactics. So if the people who are willing and able to use those tactics are in the minority, then they need the support of the majority — or else it's just never going to work.

So, back to your question. Absolutely, the property destruction in Oakland led to a decrease in public support and that decrease in public support is ultimately what has hurt this movement the most.

Spirit: *Where is the Occupy movement today, in your view? And what happened to the great hopes it sparked only a year ago and where is it now headed?*

Kazu: One of the things I've been thinking a lot about is the fact that after the end of the Montgomery bus boycott and the beginning of the lunch counter sit-ins, which was the next major campaign of the civil rights movement in the South, there was a four-year lull.

So I think we're in that lull right now, and the potential to gain that momentum is still there — as long as we're active in between, and we don't look at the lull and say, "Oh, the movement is dead," and we just give up. I think as long as we keep moving, and as long as we keep organizing, and as long as we keep evaluating our past successes and failures, I do think that the potential for this movement to become reborn, if you will, is definitely there. We've just got to be really strategic about how we're moving forward in this time.

Spirit: *How do you understand what happened with the civil rights movement in that interval between the end of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1956 and the student sit-ins at lunch counters in 1960? What did civil rights activists do during those four years?*

Kazu: A lot of what they did was training and strategizing and building networks. And strengthening those networks so that the next time that opportunity came about, they were much more ready to take advantage of it and ride that momentum long-term. For example, one of the most successful lunch-counter sit-ins was one that Dr. Lafayette was involved in down in Nashville. They trained for an entire year before they engaged in those sit-ins.

So what I look at with Occupy is what types of trainings are we doing to ensure that the next time people are trained to do this? I think that the idea that we're sending people into the streets to fight for justice and face potential police violence without being trained at all is dangerous and ludicrous. Social change does not come easily. People need to know what they're doing. We need to be building a nonviolent army who are disciplined and strategic and know exactly what needs to happen.

Spirit: *What positive things do you think were accomplished by Occupy?*

Kazu: One of the things that Occupy did that we're still benefiting from today is that it woke up so many people. So it's no longer taboo to say that we're calling for radical, fundamental changes in this country. That is a huge, huge success of this movement. If we can continue to take advantage of that and continue to work with people who, before this movement, may never have considered doing any sort of direct action, and continue to train them, and continue to strengthen those relationships, and continue to push for some of the analysis around economic injustice that came out of Occupy, I do think we can be reborn as a movement.

Spirit: *What did you learn in the course of being involved with the people of color caucus in Occupy?*

Kazu: I can only speak from the perspective of Occupy Oakland. The conversation around the names "Occupy" and "Decolonize" pissed off a lot of communities of color. A lot of people of color felt really disrespected during that argument.

Spirit: *What issues were at the heart of that conflict? What led to so many people feeling disrespected?*

Kazu: A lot of people felt like the term "Occupy" was not a fitting term for what we were actually trying to do, especially with the really strong presence of indigenous leaders and indigenous activists in the Bay Area. A lot of people felt like our communities have been occupied for so long, that we weren't trying to occupy our communities. We were trying to *liberate* our communities. We were trying to *decolonize* our communities.

In our efforts to reach out to communities of color, it's all about recognizing the history of what has happened to these communities of color. So a lot of people were advocating changing our name from "Occupy" to "Decolonize." I think a lot of those disagreements were legitimate and people have every right to believe one way or another. But the tone of the discussions were at times very hurtful and disrespectful to people.

Spirit: *All that made it tougher to build a movement that united and included people instead of alienating them.*

Kazu: We always say that nonviolence isn't just a guide for our external actions,

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In the last speech King gave in Memphis the night before he was assassinated, he was actually calling on people to move their money out of big banks and move it into local financial institutions.

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but it also has to be a guide for our internal interactions with each other within the movement. There were so many instances where people felt hurt and disrespected and there was just a lot of power dynamics and issues of privilege that came into play that people weren't recognizing.

Spirit: *So many people of color who live in Oakland ended up feeling that they were not being heard on the very issues that affect them every day.*

Kazu: Exactly, exactly. A lot of communities of color felt disrespected by that, and several other incidents happened in Occupy Oakland that really turned off a lot of communities of color to this movement.

Spirit: *Did immigrant activists also end up feeling ignored or shunted aside?*

Kazu: A lot of conflicts happened in the May Day rally last year in Oakland. For the last several years, May Day has been a really important day for the immigrant community to turn out their members. But there were some factions within the Occupy movement that were really upset that the main march applied for a permit. They felt this should be an unlimited rally, as has been the culture of Occupy Oakland.

But, of course, if you're mobilizing the immigrant community, and you're trying to turn out kids and undocumented people, they need to know that they're going to be safe. I think there were a lot of things like that where we didn't have the ability to have real discussions.

Spirit: *Now let's focus again on how the Positive Peace Warrior Network tries to build up and strengthen the movement. You give intensive two-day trainings in Kingian Nonviolence and there's even 40-hour sessions. What in the world can you do to fill up such a long training period?*

Kazu: Oh, are you serious?! Two days is never enough for us *[laughing]*. It's never enough for us! One of the great things about our workshop is we try to hit at every single learning style. So we do mini-lectures, we do readings, we do videos, we do roleplays and small group work.

This curriculum is ultimately about how to change the world and how to change your relationship to the world. It's a deep philosophy. The biggest misconception about nonviolence is that it means to not be violent. If you're simply learning about how to not be violent, you might be able to get a lot of good lessons in a day or two. But learning how to confront violence, and learning how to become the antidote to violence, and the antidote to injustice, is a lifelong struggle.

So we actually say our two-day workshop is not even a training. It's an introduction to a philosophy which you can be trained in, if you so choose. But it's really just an introduction to a framework of how to look at conflicts, how to analyze conflicts and how to respond to those conflicts.

Spirit: *The Positive Peace Warrior Network gave many nonviolent sessions for hundreds of people involved in Occupy last year. What effect do you think your trainings had on the movement?*

Kazu: There's so many misconceptions about what nonviolence means, that I think we did a really good job of providing a larger framework of the philosophy to people. I think it gave people a good way to continue to have these discussions within their local Occupy movement.

I hope that we really did get people to understand the importance of reaching across the aisle, whether it's reaching across the aisle to anarchist communities, or reaching across the aisle to city governments or even police departments. There needs to be dialogue, and we put that out there heavily. I hope that the next time this movement has a new wave of momentum, a lot of those lessons will stay intact.

Spirit: *How many people has the PPWN trained over the past year and what kind of groups have you trained?*

Kazu: Coming into this year last January, we had only one two-day workshop scheduled. In the last 11 months since then, we've held about 40 workshops of at least two days duration.

We've reached well over one thousand people in the last 11 months between last January and November 2012. About 350 of them have been men and women in the local county jails, about 350 more have been young people of high-school age, and the rest have been in communities all across the country in eight different states.

Spirit: *How are your 40-hour trainings that last five days different from the two-day introduction to nonviolence?*

Kazu: The 40-hour trainings typically are our advanced youth curriculum. We take young people through a five-day intensive training and at the end of it, those who pass are certified to become youth presenters. So our goals is always the "each one teach one" philosophy.

We train high-school students so they can start training their peers and eventually, the high-school students can go to the middle schools and start training middle-school students. Our week-long trainings are an effort to recruit more young people who can do presentations in this philosophy.

Spirit: *Sally Hindman, the director of Youth Spirit Artworks, said that your workshops on Dr. King's philosophy had a profound impact on the youth she works with. Some of them told her the trainings were life-changing. Why do you think it has such a dramatic impact?*

Kazu: I'm always amazed that there are a lot of those special moments that come from almost every single workshop. I've seen it have that impact on young people, and on men and women in prison. I can really identify with it because it was a similar process for me when I went through the Kingian training.

Spirit: *Does it seem that some of the people who get most inspired from your nonviolence sessions are the ones who live in the most violent environments?*

Kazu: We live in a very violent world and for many young people, violence is all they've ever known. We were at a workshop once in Chicago when we told a young woman that there were communities even in Chicago where young kids are not getting shot up every day. She just couldn't believe it because that's all that she's ever known.

For a lot of people, when all they've ever known is violence, when we offer them an alternative way to deal with their conflicts, it's something that they've never even thought of, because this society doesn't provide spaces for us to really think about how we're responding to the conflicts in our lives. We always say conflict itself is a completely neutral thing. It's how you respond to that conflict that gives it a positive or negative outcome.

As a society, we're only taught to respond to conflicts in a way that often tends to escalate things. So when we offer people that alternative way, I think it's a really mind-opening experience — especially for young people, and for men and women in jails and prisons who have never really thought of an alternative. It's really life-changing for a lot of people.

Spirit: *It's very impressive to me that the Positive Peace Warrior Network holds trainings for people in jails. Not many activists even think about bringing the message of nonviolence to prisoners.*

Kazu: When we talk about building a movement or a nonviolent army in the Positive Peace Warrior Network, those men and women in prison are warriors. They have been through so much and are able to cope with so much, and they know more than anybody about the impact of violence and how violence has affected their lives and community.

They know better than anybody how much things need to change. It's their kids that are out on the streets today having to deal with all that. So in terms of looking for peace activists, the jails are some of the best places to look.

Spirit: *Gandhi looked in that same direction, too, by organizing among the Untouchables and by working with military warriors to help build a nonviolent movement. He found they had the courage to express "the nonviolence of the strong." King trained members of violent street gangs in the tough parts of Chicago as nonviolent marshals in his housing marches.*

Some might wonder if teaching nonviolence to a captive audience could seem alienating to prisoners. What have those trainings in jails really been like?

Kazu: We've done them in San Bruno County Jail and in the Hall of Justice in San Francisco. And they've been incredible. What always amazes me is that often, a good half of the participants didn't volunteer to be there. And they let us know from the very beginning that they are not happy at the fact that they're there.

Spirit: *They were ordered to be there by the prison officials?*

Kazu: They were ordered to be there. And when they find out that it's two consecutive eight-hour days, a lot of them get really upset at us. So that's often where we start with the day. But in every workshop we've done, by the end of it, it feels like the entire crowd has been won over.

One gentleman told us recently that he hates coming to jail over and over and over again, but if he didn't get locked up this time, he wouldn't have come to this workshop, so for that time it was worth it.

We've even gotten comments from some of the deputies on the staff who kind of sneak up to us after the event is over and say, "Hey, don't tell the guys I told you this, but even I was listening to what you were saying, and I'm going to practice a lot of what you were telling the guys."

The last woman's jail that we went into at the Hall of Justice in San Francisco, there were two women who had a conflict prior to that workshop. So when they saw each other that morning, they really didn't feel like they could be in the same room.

But after the first day of the workshop, they felt inspired to try to reconcile that conflict. During the closing circle of the workshop, the women embraced with a hug in the middle of the circle. There's just constant stories like this. And that's just in two days! So our jail workshops have been going incredibly well.

Spirit: *How did you get the idea in the first place that you were actually going to go into jails to do nonviolence trainings?*

Kazu: Oh, I've always wanted to! If we're trying to create peace in our communities, we need to reach out to the folks most impacted by violence and injustice. Those are the men and women in the jails and prisons, and in the poorest, dangerous neighborhoods, and those are the folks that often get left out of society.

I feel like if anything is going to change in communities like East Oakland, we need to empower the folks who have been living in those communities, and who have been harmed by some of the policies that created those conditions.

So, to me, if we don't have leadership from men and women who are getting locked up, men and women who have been homeless, then ultimately, we will never be able to create sustained change. I feel like we need to start there.

Spirit: *When Dr. Lafayette spoke here in Oakland on the International Day of Peace, I remember how joyful he seemed at the response of prisoners in San Bruno jail to the presentations on nonviolence. How did those sessions go?*

Kazu: I think it was great! Because I don't know how common it is for someone like Dr. Lafayette to go into the jails to bring programming like that from someone with a big name like that.

I think it's really important that we are constantly reminding the men and women in the jails that society hasn't forgotten them, and that we are trying to offer things for them, that we are trying to work with them, and build with them.

I think Dr. Lafayette was pretty impressed with the work we have been doing in there. Because up until recently, almost all our work has been outside of the jails. So for him to be able to go into jail, and to see these guys that have been so inspired by the workshop that he created, I think it's really exciting for him.

Spirit: *Another group that has been marginalized and ignored by society are the youth living in very poor neighborhoods. It seems that the Positive Peace Warrior Network also focuses a great deal of effort on training these young people forgotten by society.*

Kazu: Yes, and for important reasons. No movement has been successful in the past without leadership from young people. But also, I recognize that my vision of the beloved community isn't something I'm going to see in my lifetime. So whatever gains we make during my lifetime, we have to make sure that the next generation is ready to take up the call after my generation is gone.

As long as we're not investing in our young people, it's very possible that the gains that we make in our movement are just going to get lost in the next generation. So I think we need to constantly, constantly, invest in our young people.

Support the Positive Peace Warrior Network

Our success is only possible with the support of the community. Please join us in our efforts to build the Beloved Community.

Donate to PPWN

Donations to PPWN are tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor, the Peace Development Fund. Please make out checks to "Peace Development Fund" and earmark checks to "PPWN."

Mail donations to: PPWN, P.O. Box 1554, Oakland, CA 94604

Donate online at http://positivepeacewarriornetwork.wordpress.com

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"I just admire the Positive Peace Warrior Network like crazy. I think they're awesome. They should be better funded because they're living on a total shoestring and they need money really badly. They're traveling all over the country doing training after training, and they're doing this on nothing. These amazing trainings need to be funded. They're just great guys." — Sally Hindman

Elvis Dies Alone and Unmourned in San Francisco

from page 3

beyond their power to control, are being driven to inhabit increasingly dangerous marginal places in our public spaces.

For example, Elvis was run over by an automobile on two separate occasions in recent years. On each occasion, he was sleeping in a dangerous location.

When he was suffering immediate agony due to being run over by a car, healthcare officials would take him away for a few weeks to mend. During those periods, they more or less took good care of his physical problems. But I never got the impression that they made any serious effort to help him deal with his obviously deep-seated mental and emotional demons.

I have many photographs of him hobbling along the street with the help of crutches, or a walking cane. In some of the shots, his hospital bandages are still clean. In others, they are grimy and falling from his body.

Occasionally, Elvis would disappear from his usual streetside stations. Curious about his disappearances, I asked him once where he had been for the past few weeks. He told me he was being studied by a group of University of California doctors for health-related issues pertinent to the years he spent in the military.

His garbled, confusing comments regarding the reasons why he was allegedly being studied were never sufficiently coherent for me to truly understand what he was attempting to tell me. Moreover, I was never certain as to whether he was pulling my leg just to keep my attention, and thereby acquire company and companionship for a few more minutes.

I am certain that he was in the military, and that he probably participated in war. He lived in Texas and Georgia. And that's about all I know about his background.

I do know that he was a fine human being with a warm and compassionate sensibility.

Many of the homeless people who used to hang out with Elvis along Third Street near South Park have drifted away over the years. Some of them have moved on to other cities. Others have been removed from the street via municipal outreach programs, and resettled in single room occupancy hotels located in the vicinity of the Sixth Street skid row corridor.

A few of the homeless people who used to hang out with Elvis have cleaned up and re-entered mainstream society. But far too many of them have simply died on the streets in much the same manner as wild animals.

City official say they picked up the remains of 28 people on the streets of San Francisco last year. But homeless advocates claim the number of actual deaths was more than 100. In years past, when the Medical Examiner's office still worked with homeless organizations to more truthfully measure the death rates of homeless people in San Francisco (a practice that now has been discontinued), the number of homeless deaths each year always was more than 100, and sometimes added up to 150 or more. Approximately 200 indigents are cremated each year by the city government.

In any event, Elvis was one of the last members of the homeless group that inhabited this neighborhood before it began to gentrify during the Dot Com era. Little by little, as the neighborhood began the upwardly mobile transition from shop worn to tres chic, life became more complicated for people like Elvis.

For obvious reasons, they do not fit in with the upwardly mobile crowd that has essentially taken over the neighborhood. They are too old, too ragged, too unkempt and too much alienated from the cultural norms of the new breed.

As a result, the neighborhood's homeless residents are finding it increasingly difficult to find local facilities suited to their essentially modest needs.

The cheap showers they used at the old parking facility for recreational vehicles located on Townsend and Third Streets near the new baseball stadium are things of the past. The parking facility, and all the minimal amenities it provided for transients, has been replaced by a massive, high-rise development, largely inhabited by wealthy tech workers and empty nesters from the suburbs.

South Park was the primary meeting place for local homeless people for many years. On sunny days, they gathered there in large numbers, talking, snoozing, and swilling cheap booze. But the new people, with their expensive cars and pedigree dogs, are taking over the park.

As a result, homeless people such as Elvis are relegated to a narrow sliver of territory at the far western end of the park, where they gather daily around a single picnic table and a couple benches.

The broad expanse of the park, including the grassy areas, is reserved, according to an unspoken agreement, for the new people, and their frolicking dogs.

Elvis was killed as he lay sleeping less than a five-minute walk from the South Park picnic table where he spent many sunny afternoons.

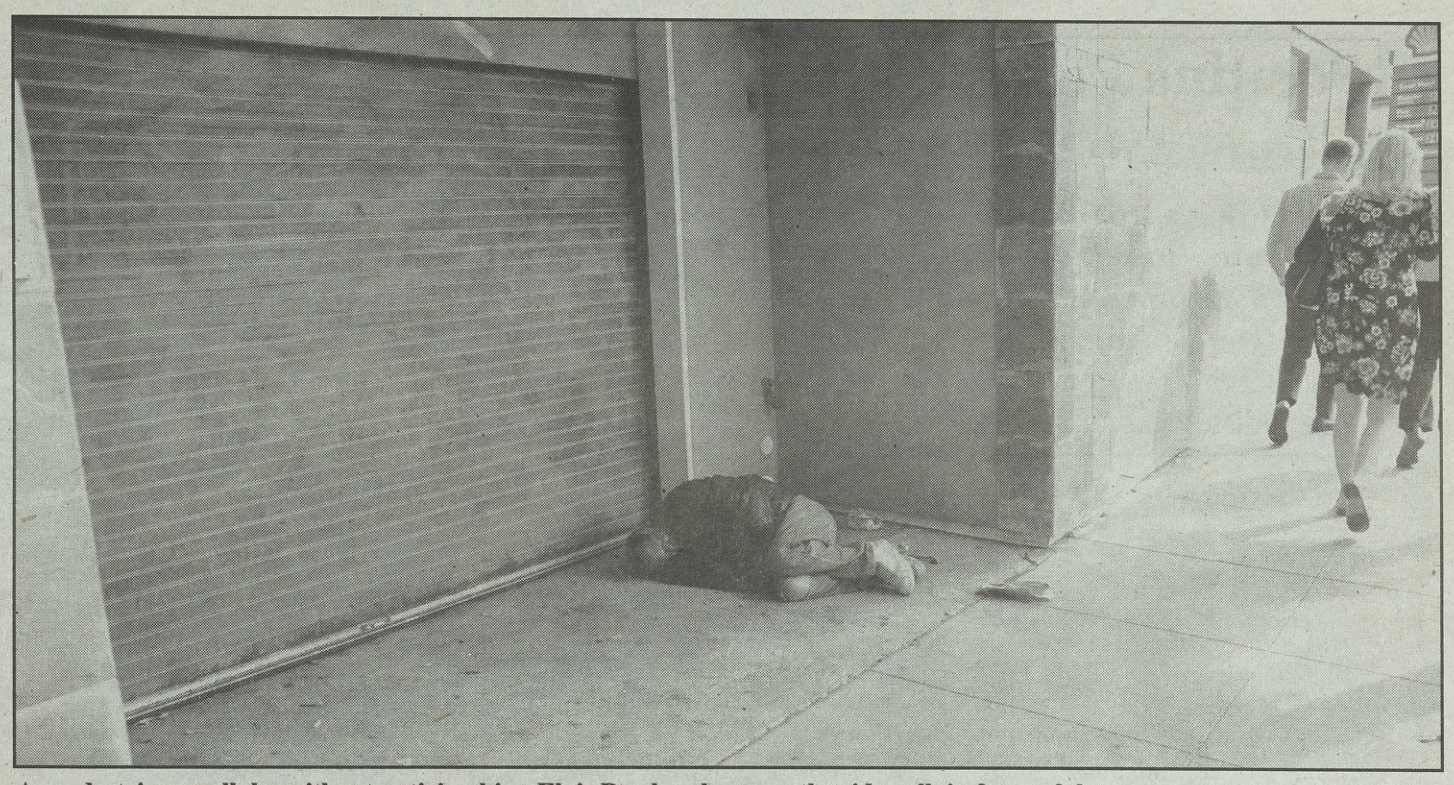
The spot where he was crushed used to be the driveway of an old, abandoned gas station. During the rainy season, homeless people gathered inside the empty structure and sheltered from the weather.

That building was torn down during the Dot Com boom, and replaced by a condominium development composed of individual units that initially sold for upwards of 700,000 dollars.

Most of Elvis's homeless peers abandoned the site when the new owners took up residence in the building. But Elvis continued to drink, pass out and sleep in the same location he had used for years.

Unfortunately, that location had been transformed into the entrance to the new building's garage.

They say he never knew what hit him.



As pedestrians walk by without noticing him, Elvis Presley sleeps on the sidewalk in front of the very same garage door on the 500 block of Third Street in San Francisco where he was subsequently run over and killed. Robert L. Terrell photo

Notice to Past Residents: Lawsuit Against Oakland's Sutter Hotel

Notice to Class: If you lived at the Sutter Hotel located at 584 14th Street Oakland, California for at least 30 consecutive days during the period of August 12, 2010, until November 30, 2011, this notice may affect your rights.

Residents of the Sutter Hotel have sued the owner/managers claiming that the Sutter has had an illegal practice of requiring residents who lived at the Sutter for more than 30 consecutive days to move, or check out and register in the same or a different room before the expiration of 30 days.

The lawsuit is called *Veasey v. Oakland Sutter Hotel, L.P.* Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG 11-590352. The Court decided this lawsuit should be a "Class Action" or "class" or group of people that may include past residents of the Sutter. This notice summarizes their rights and options in this case.

More information is in a detailed notice available at the website below. If you're included, you have to decide whether to stay in the Class and be bound by whatever results, or ask to be excluded. There is no money available now, but there may be money or other benefits available through settlement or trial. There are no guarantees that money or other benefits will be available.

Are You Affected?

If you lived at the Sutter Hotel for 30 or more consecutive days at any time during the period of August 12, 2010 until November 30, 2011, and moved rooms before 30 days expired, you may be part of the class. If you are not sure if you are included, you can call or write the lawyers at the phone number or address below.

What Is This Case About?

The lawsuit is about whether the owners of the Sutter Hotel illegally required residents to move from room to room every 28 days or leave the Hotel, in violation of their rights. Plaintiffs are suing to make sure the practice is stopped, and to sue for money damages. The Sutter Hotel owners/managers deny that they did anything wrong. The Court has not yet made any decision as to whether the Class or the Sutter Hotel is right.

Who Represents You?

The Court has decided that the law firms of Greenstein and McDonald, 300 Montgomery Street, Suite 621, San Francisco, CA, 94104, (415) 773-1240 and Law Office of Jay B. Koslofsky, P.O. Box 9236, Berkeley, CA, 94709, (510) 280-5627, are qualified to represent you and class members. Together the law firms are called "class counsel." They are experienced in handling similar cases. The Court has accepted "Class Representatives whose claims are typical of the Class." You may hire your own lawyer. If you want your own lawyer, you will have to pay for that lawyer, if you want someone other than Class Counsel.

What Are Your Options?

You don't have to do anything now if you want to keep the possibility of getting money or benefits from this lawsuit. By doing nothing you are staying in the class. If you stay in the case, and the Plaintiffs obtain money or benefits either as a result of settlement or trial, you will be notified about how to apply for a share (or you may object to the settlement). If you do nothing, you will be legally bound by any orders or judgments the Court enters in this case. If you exclude yourself from the Class, you won't get any money or benefits from the lawsuit even if the Plaintiffs receive them by settlement or trial.

If you exclude yourself, you can file your own separate lawsuit, but will have to hire and pay for your own lawyers, and you will have to prove your claims. To ask to be excluded, you must send an "Exclusion Request" in the form of a letter sent by mail stating that you want to be excluded from the *Veasey v Oakland Sutter Hotel L.P.* class. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number, and sign the letter. The letter should be sent to: Kenneth Greenstein, Greenstein and McDonald, 300 Montgomery Street, Suite 621, San Francisco, CA, 94104. You must mail your Exclusion Request postmarked by December 30, 2012.

How Can I Get More Information?

Visit the website www.sutterhotelclassaction.com, where you will find the Court's Order Certifying the Class, the Complaint that the Plaintiffs submitted, and the Defendants Answer to Complaint. You may also speak to one of the lawyers by calling Kenneth Greenstein (415) 773-1240 or Jay B. Koslofsky (510) 280-5627. You may also write to Greenstein and McDonald at 300 Montgomery at Suite 621, San Francisco, CA, 94104.

Who's Affected?

Sutter Hotel residents who resided at the Hotel for 30 or more consecutive days who moved, or checked-out of a room at the Hotel and registered in the same or a different room before the expiration of 30 days at any time during the period of August 12, 2010, until November 30, 2011. If you are a class member, your deadline to opt-out is December 30, 2012.

Recycling and Redemption

Far from being a story about a destitute underclass, *Redemption* celebrates the stories of four great Americans, and challenges viewers to face their prejudices head on.

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by food stamps — Hayok barely moved. She had been so devastated by illness that it took everything she had even to get up and purchase food, let alone to trudge a shopping cart brimming with trash all over West Oakland.

As of this writing, she has been well enough to resume recycling, though any day now the chill of winter will doubtless leave her incapable of generating any income, yet again.

I wish I could say that the severe hardships faced by Miss Kay are unusual, but a single day at one of the East Bay's many walk-up recycling centers tells you a different story. Alliance Metals alone serves some 700 customers a day. While not all of these are homeless, many of them are, and those who are fortunate enough to have a home likely wouldn't without the added income they receive from recycling. If any of these individuals were to get sick like Miss Kay, the loss of income could equate to a loss of everything they have ever worked for.

Another recycler, Jason Witt, knows all too well what that is like. To many around the Alliance Metals community, Jason is thought of as one of the kings of recycling. On a good day, you can see Jason pull a ton of trash to the recycling center — literally.

It's a surreal experience watching Jason carry his bounty down the street: a single man, hands calloused, pulling a mountain of trash on a creaking shopping cart, often with his beloved dog Monster at his side. Jason is one of the few able to take recycling to the extreme. His income wasn't massive, but it was enough to rent a small home in West Oakland's lower bottoms.

But after another bout of illness — including endocarditis (an inflammation of the inside of the heart) and various viruses from drug use — Jason too became unable to work, and he soon lost everything. He is currently in and out of hospital visits, living in a nook between a BART station and the highway.

But while the stories of Hayok, Jason, and countless other shopping-cart recyclers may seem bleak, the incredible thing about each of them is that they are not only surviving, but they are doing it creatively and productively, in spite of the immeasurable odds placed against them.

Hayok Kay pulls her shopping cart in Emeryville while collecting cans on the way to the recycling center. Chihiro Wimbush photo

Jason *(at left)* picks up a huge amount of recycled material on his hardworking travels through the East Bay. Amir Soltani photo

In doing so, their stories become an invaluable asset to society — something akin to living maps which illustrate the holes in our safety nets and the true beauty, dignity, and value of those who fell through them. They show us why we need to recognize and rectify these faults — and what we are set to lose if we do not.

Over the past four years, my colleagues Amir Soltani, Chihiro Wimbush and I have sought to illuminate these stories through the medium of film. Our forthcoming production, *Redemption,* documents the lives and trials of four shopping-cart recyclers — entrepreneurs who live on the East Bay's river of trash.

Recently, the film has received funding from Sundance, Cal Humanities, the San Francisco Foundation, and others. Our goal in bringing this project to fruition is to reignite the poverty debate in the United States — and to reimagine how we define and address economic inequality, racial discrimination, public space, and our relationships with the poorest of the poor.

Far from being a story about a destitute underclass, *Redemption* celebrates the stories of four great Americans, and aims to challenge viewers to face their own prejudices and insecurities head on and to engage in dialogue to alleviate them.

I believe this film has this power because I have experienced it. In my role in the creation of *Redemption,* I have been forced to recognize the walls I had built within myself — the prejudices, the ignorance, and the apathy which have prevented me from recognizing and connecting with the poor.

I have learned things about poverty and the people who experience it that I had never even considered. Perhaps most importantly, I have made friendships with people I previously would have turned a blind eye to and walked past.

These people — my friends, your friends, these members of our community — require that we do more than pay lip-service to the idea of eliminating poverty.

It's time to demand more not only from our government, our business, and our city officials, but also from ourselves, and to recognize and celebrate the connections and relationships between us all.

This process of opening up, of forgiving, and most importantly, of loving, is what redemption is all about.

Zachary Stickney is the associate producer of *Redemption*. He can be reached at redemptiondocumentary@gmail.com. To learn more about *Redemption,* visit the film's website at www.redemptiondoc.org.

This powerful image of the battered, callused hands of Jason Witt speaks volumes about the difficulties inherent in his work gathering mountains of recycled material.

A group of recyclers at the Alliance Metals recycling center. *From left to right,* Landon Goodwin, Hayok Kay, Roslin Sanders and Jason Witt. Amir Soltani photo